



Skin Horse 6 Release Party

Borderlands Books
866 Valencia St.
San Francisco

January 14
3:00 PM



Glad to have you on board. You're just in time.

To help with radiation-produced nonhumans?



Better! You get to enjoy the morale boost of our annual Secret Santa exchange!



Did she say Secret Santa? Secret friggin' Santa?!

Like we talked about. Visit your calm place.



Do we, er, have morale problems?

Mostly due to the Secret Santa exchange. Try to keep up.



Do we **have** to do Secret Santa?

I get it. Not everyone can budget for an extra gift.

That's why, this year, our superiors have mandated that we spend **nothing.**

Madam, I beg you! My arms are woefully inadequate for this "Crafting"!

As you can see, it's a high point of our employee year.

HITTY'S MASON JAR CANDLES NOT COMING OUT AS PLANNED.

We used to pick names from a hat, but a bigger staff complicates things.



So we purchased a Cray XC40 to match each employee with their Secret Santa!



Overkill much?

Year-end surplus. If we don't spend our budget, they give us less.



That's how the D of I got an Addams Family pinball machine.



It was essential spectrography equipment!

Roped you in too, huh, Lee?

Isn't it festive? I love volunteering here!



Ugh. What could be less fun than government-mandated cheer?

Well.



Attention, staff: For the holidays, Anasigma suspends the shooting of random employees.



It turned out they were just keeping us alive to harvest our hair.

What the hell, private sector?



Admit it.
Making
presents
sucks.

What?
That's where
we get to
be creative!

I've already had
so many ideas for
DIY gifts! The hard
part is picking
just one!

Plans for a skin-
melting ray... or a
simple home mutagen
...or, ooh, a
tornado machine!

*It's the most wonderful
time of the year...*

The skin-melter has
plenty of peacetime
applications.

You're giving away Anasigma blueprints?

Oh no no no! Anasigma might find out!



These are just little projects I fiddle with in my spare time.

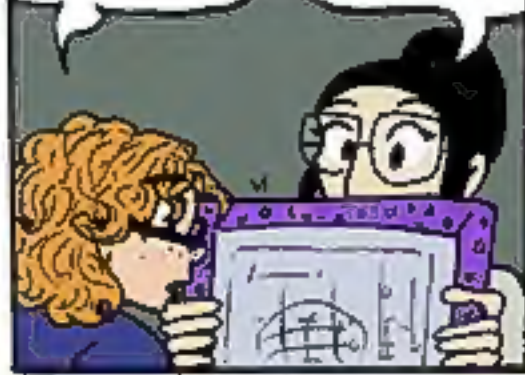


How's this different from what you design for the evil defense contractor?



I put **this** in a festive twinkly frame!

You'll make some warmonger's Christmas.



The twinkles are from deuterium fusion.



Sheesh, Babe's making me hate Santas.

You just need to reframe.



Kawhat?

Don't see it as a chore. Find a reward in the task.



No, I **can't** dislodge a dead porcupine from an air vent. Is that what you mibs called me in for?



Like Huh? Sorry, I was distracted by a potential blemish.



If you're stuck for ideas, do what I'm doing. Give **information.**



Like... No! I compiled a list of free movie spoilers psychological resources online.



You're giving the gift of telling people what's wrong with them?



Er. Yes. But in a non-shaming way.

I like my dead porcupine idea better. Your what?



Don't worry, Mr. Silvers. I'll clear out that porcupine for free.

The price point isn't my biggest concern.



You won't even have to reach in there!

Still not my biggest concern.



That. **That** was my biggest concern.

Hooray for science barf!



You spewed bile in
the vent. What
now?

Give the
Me a sec
to work...



Whoa!

Yay!



ALIEEEEE
MY EYES!

MY ENTIRE
BODY!



A What's miraculous
holiday is the speed
miracle those cubicle
jockeys can hit
when motivated.



Let's get this disciplinary meeting over so I can go back to listening to crummy Christmas music.



It seems your Secret Santa gift to Shelby was a "zombie porcupine" that went rogue, hospitalizing three.



Do you have any **idea** how wrong that was?



I'm sorry!

That Secret Santa wasn't secret at **all**!



I've ruined Secret Christmas!



Why're you listening to music you hate, anyway?

Most of the album's great. I just can't stand Track 7.



So skip it.

But then the album wouldn't be **complete**.



Oh, like how you have to watch all the movie credits. Otherwise, if I said I saw the movie—



...I'd be **lying!**

Aren't I supposed to be disciplining **you?**





Er, Sweetheart? I haven't received my Secret Santa assignment. Really?



I thought they were all sent out. Let's check the supercomputer.



It says it didn't put you on the list because it's scared of you.



Oh, you're a **mean** Grinch. We shouldn't have made you load it up with cat videos.



Dangit, computer!
Give Dr. Lee a
Secret
Santa!

That's
all right.

I know! I'll hire
a guy to be your
Secret Santa
and then
fire him!

No, no.

You sure you're
okay?

You're not
lying?

Yes!

No!

Fa la la la la
la la la la...

Hors d'oeuvres?



Some jerk left a gum wrapper on your desk.

That's no ordinary gum wrapper!

It's an origami unicorn from "Blade Runner"!



My favorite non-Swayze movie! Did anyone see who left it?

I did. It was a kindly old man who came in from the roof.

It... it can't be...

The memory of how to rappel out of a helicopter never leaves you.

Thanks, Ira.

Who?

You're a mensch, Ira.

Whatever you say, magic voice.



It's a shame no one gave **you** a present.

You gave me a present, Ira.



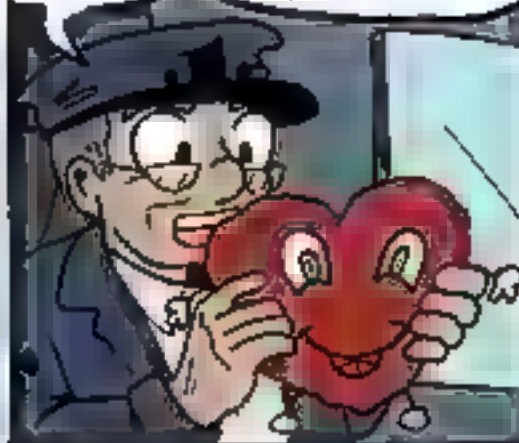
I did?

It's a plushie heart with a card that says, "To Mary Ann With Kisses."



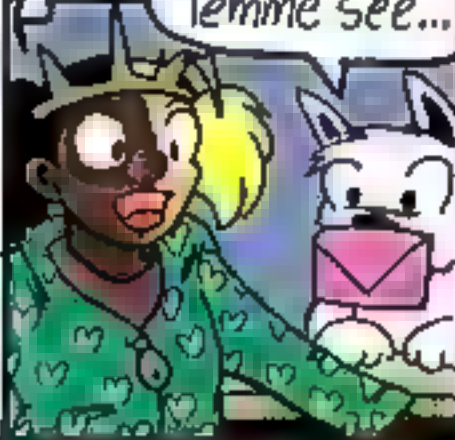
A happy Armistice Day to all!

A mensch who needs constant supervision.



Babe! Santa got me
one of Tip's busted
old
tiaras!

I got...
lemme see...



Babe, you know that
album w/ the track
u hate? It's not on
the Brazilian release.
So you can delete it
& still have
the full album.

XOXO
SANTA
(not Unity)



Secrecy! And I got
my recipient
an amazing gift
I just found at
the office



Who left a rotting
porcupine in my
desk?



Happy
holidays,
Babe.

Later we
can roll
in it!

Ira, I reviewed the security footage. **You** gave me that unicorn.

I'll take your word for it, ma'am.



Here. It's the blueprint for a weather control device. Dr Jones can build it for you.



That way, if it gets cold while you're on duty, you can adjust the heat.



Happy New Year, Ira.

Happy New Year, Virginia.



I did it, Aimee. I stopped wussing out and gave Dr Lee a romantic present. Yeah? What'd you get her?



An old gum wrapper.

... Well, at least she knows you're thinking of her.



I hired a guy to drop it off in secret.



Course you did.

He gets amnesia, so not even he knows. Real display of not-wussery, cowboy.



Crackers, Nick. Since you started working here, you haven't shut up about that lady.

I know, I know.

I already chickened out once, and everything I do just shines it up more.

How come it's so easy to talk to **you** and not **her**?

'Cause as your coworker I hate you as much as you hate yourself?

I got it. I'll stare creepily at her Facebook for hours.

Gotta run.
Taskmasters have
me under the
gosh-darn whip.

I hear
you.

Can't believe you
quit a cushy
government job to
work for the soul-
suckin' corp of
all.

Yeah,
well.

Welcome to Whimsy
airspace, the happiest
airspace on Earth!

Turns out loving sausage
doesn't mean you oughta
go work at a sausage
factory.

Hee hee.
Sausage.

Welcome back to Whimsy DreamLabs!
Hope your vacation made you cheery!

Sure.

Because ~~we~~ aren't cheery when your personal time interferes with our timeline to project launch.

But keep a song in your heart, and we won't have to deduct Teamwork Points!

Baron Mistycorn, is it ever good to see an unsmiling face.

See if you're smiling after I jam this fuel line up you.

I been chatting with
one of the beta testers.
I kinda like her.

She hot?
Scale of one
to ten.

Dunno. Aint met
her in person yet.

Whoa whoa whoa.
Bad idea.
Bad idea

You dumbass! What
if you see her
and she's the freak
of the week?

Yeah, she could be like
a tubby little robot
unicorn or some
sweat.

Exac-
hey.

Greetings, Nick! Are you ready to beta-test VR Whimsyworld?

Sure, why not.



Your cybernetics have been key to our research. We'd like to see how you interface with the program.

So what do I do?



Play! Explore! Lift that dour heart!



Translation: you want me to try to break it.

Yes, we want you to break it. Is my irony sequencer online?





We've invested millions in a fully immersive VR experience.



You're about to test cutting-edge tech for one of the world's largest companies.



A company that caters to the tween-and-under set.

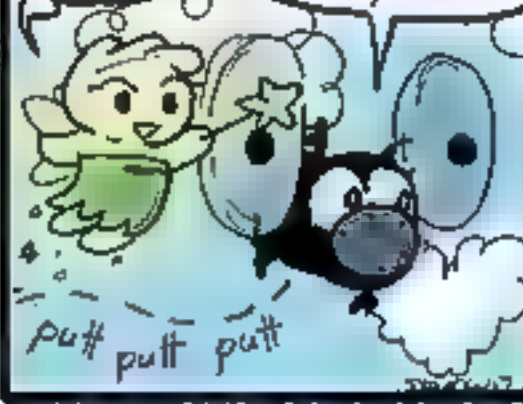


Ooh, are you a fairy?

I am!

Hark! The song of a
swiftlet from
yonder cloud!

Miniquet
#1, huh?



Tweedle dee dee!
Rhyme with me!

Go on,
Nick!



Even in VR, my
contract has a "no
rhyming" clause.

In VR, my wand
has a "cattle
prod" setting



Tweedle
dee dee,
bite my
nacelles.

Sorry,
Swiftlet.
He's with
I.T.





joy



Hmph! You are **terrible** at rhyming!

Good work, Nick



You're not mad? As I said, your job is to find and exploit weaknesses in the program.



Oh yeah. In that case, I'mo check inventory for razor wire, a fowling net, and nails



Thank you for your contribution to Whimsy joy.

And we need to test every possible way of using this for porn.



A net? Yeah, See, that bird respawns every time we pass this cloud.



Tweedle dee dee! Rhyme with me! It's easy to make him leave. Scram, raisin brain.

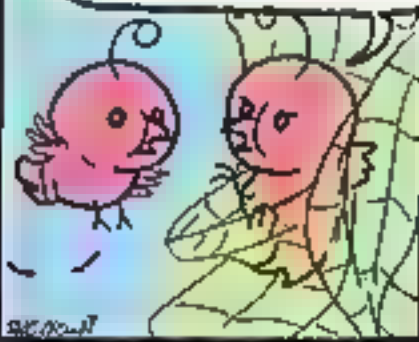


But if anything stops this dummy from exiting the area... Hey! I'm right here!

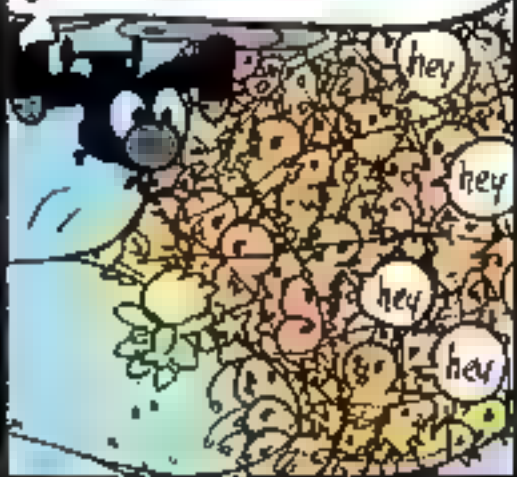


Actually, I'm... over here?

Now I'm trapped **and** I have an existential crisis.



With this build and no life, a user can generate infinite birds.



But no server can handle infinite mobs,

so...

Let all infinity of us outta here tough guy!



Boop



Chips, I wish it was that easy to vanish RL dimples.

I thought we'd make it as far as Candy Island.



Excellent work on that terrifying program!

Respectfully, ma'am, that was kerplunking tame.

I dunno, happy songbirds make **me** wanna scream.

Silly Baron! That's not the terrifying part!

Then what the eggshell **is?**

During the sim, you didn't even **try** to swear.

AIEEEE!!!

I just crapped myself, and I don't have a butthole.

Whimsy magic!



After dinner in the garden, the
children played.

What the
sparkle
did you
do to
me?

What we
always do.
Make wishes
come true!



Your potty-word
filter is awfully
clever. We just
amped it in the
VR.



You mean you
turned it into
full-on mind
control. Why,
yes! So?



So if I
find a chick
who **wishes**
she wanted
to do me...

I'm
terrified
beyond the
capacity
for snark.



This is serious, Baron!
Can you have morals
for like
three
seconds?

Pass.
Let's game.

Your Whimsy theme
song is "Dream a
Dream of Heroes."

Know who had
dreams? My
creator, Doc Collodi.

And what'd it
get him?
Pitchfork mob.
Splat.

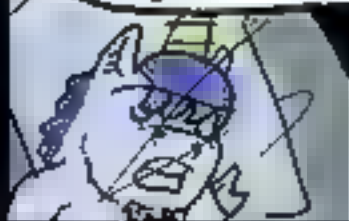
His dream
was to
conquer
the world
with robots.

Then people
with ~~no~~ dreams
got us in every
toy store on
earth. Check
and mate.



Welp, it's been a long night of pwnage, and I'm gonna quit while you're behind.

Something whimsy said bugs me.



She said she made my wish come true. Like I secretly **wanted** to not cuss.



Maybe I made it happen by wishing I was different.

Cool. You can wish you weren't crap at Overwatch.



Talking important honey here, Baron.

So'm I, you Hanzo-loving suckhead.



Hey, Aimee. You playtest that pinked-up cloudland today?

Sure did.

I hit it with an infinite spawn glitch.

Ditto, but what about deleting your will to cuss?

I didn't notice. I never cuss.

Never? You'd be a natural! Try it!

...Nick, you button-eating toast head.

See, when I say syrup like that, it sounds dumb.



Gosh. I took this job
for playtesting, not
mind-control experiments.

If I had a nickel...
but listen, Aimee.

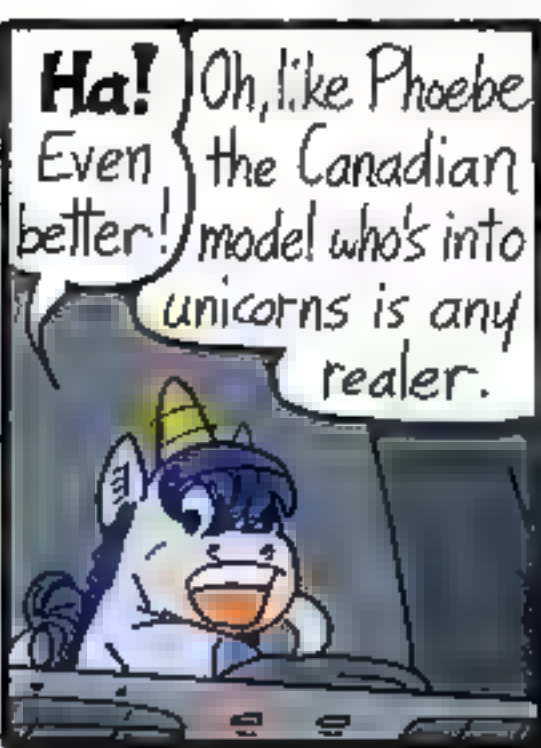
You wanna, like,
meet in person
sometime?

Nick, we're talking
mind crimes!

You're like me, but
cool. Smart, funny,
uh, well-spoken..

Later! I'll get
to the bottom
of this!

Principled at the
least convenient
times...





G! * ☆ !



Last night, Aimee disappeared into Whimsyworld VR.

How can she vanish into a program?



She's a program herself.

The rut?

To cut costs, we hired only a few playtesters and copied their minds to make AIs.



Aimee is the first to go AWOL. Nick, you're the ideal person to find her.

Why m—



Oh, no way.

ask about cup size



Aimee's
an AI
based
on...
me?

With a few
tweaks. We
needed to test
to the female
demographic.



And you want me
to find her? The
Daughters of the
Air, an online AI
colony, is sending
an agent to
assist.



The
no-body,
pure AIs?
Buncha
popcorn
poppers.

They **do**
tend to
have a
superiority
complex
toward us.



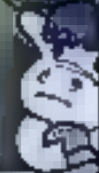
And where do you even
stick it in their
chicks?

Not that it
isn't warranted.



Okay okay
okay. Did
Aimee think
she was, like,
a regular
person?

Yes. We
programmed
a VR
apartment
for her.



Upload me
there first

Upload
me, too.



Are
you
sure,
Baron?



Nick reminded
me I'm Whimsy's
symbol of courage.
It's time I acted
like it.



You just
wanna
see her
panties.

Wrong
I wanna
see **your**
panties.



Okay, patch
us in.

With a wave of
my wand, it
is done!



Tulips, she
is me. This
looks just like
my old human
apartment.



Gross mess...
weeaboo
crap on the
walls...

And a 9.6
chilling on
the bed.



Yup. Just like
my apartment.

Did **you** keep
socks in the
freezer too?



... Aimee?

Lovelace.
The Daughters of
the Air sent me.

I'm here to inform
Aimee of her rights
under Prop 39 and
assess her virtual
environment.

And you'd be Zerhacker.
Under that cute avatar,
you're an ex-military
cyborg and our best
hope of finding Aimee.

And
I'm the
love
interest!

I can be
a cartoon
helicopter
if it helps
you focus

I can find
Aimee. I'm
smart. I'm
skilled.

You're **her**.
See if you
can guess
her laptop
password.



Ha! Chick Nick's
room! This
is gonna
be choice!

Stick to
finding
clues.



Girl-you
writes
"Gilmore
Girls"
fanfic!

Yeah. Um.
Totally
different
from
normal me.



"Rory was just
looking for a
decent airport
coffee when
passion came
her way..."

All right,
you can
read about
while we
work.



Puppies!



Password on a sticky note? I expected better from you.

Ha ha.



Anyway, those are password **hints**.

Gimmee see!
Gimmee see!



Wait
a s-

"My ..
first..
fursona."



Rest assured I will
tweet this with all the
dignity it deserves.

I will cut you with
my adorable rotors.





This is
troubling.

This is
awesome!



Baron Mistycorn?

I'm a sweet medieval
unicorn in here! And
you're a knight!
Where's Nick?



A virgin!
The trifecta!

You're just a
jacked goat,
you know that?



Why's everything grimdark?
Why do we look like
this? I'm having as much
trouble parsing the code
as you, but I can guess.



The mind control
goes both ways. Minds
in the VR warp the
environment.



Is it still
warping us?

Come hither, friends!
If we are heroes
true, we'll delay our
quest no
longer!



I'd
say
yes

That's gosh-
darn weird.

To panties!



This environment could be a reflection of Aimee's mental strain.

Not good.



Or some outside force could be corrupting the program.

Less good.



Blast! We have no clue where to begin looking!



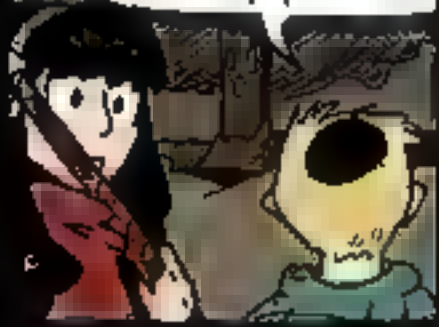
While true, I vote "creepy tower of doom."

This is where I admit I've **never** liked Whimsy movies.



So we have a goal.
How do we reach it?

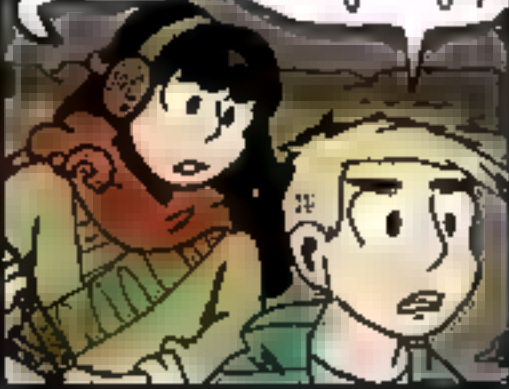
Messed up as
it is, this is a
Whimsy park.



The tower's a
Whimsy Castle.
Golden Days Street
takes us straight
there.



I don't
expect it to
live up to
the name.



Yeah, this
ain't regular
Whimsyworld.
It'll get ugly.

I used to mop up under
Mary and Gussie's Tea
Party Ride. It gets
ugly there
too.



Ew, physical
bodies.



This place
feels so real.
I can't even
change my
avatar.

Me neither.
Not that
I want
to.

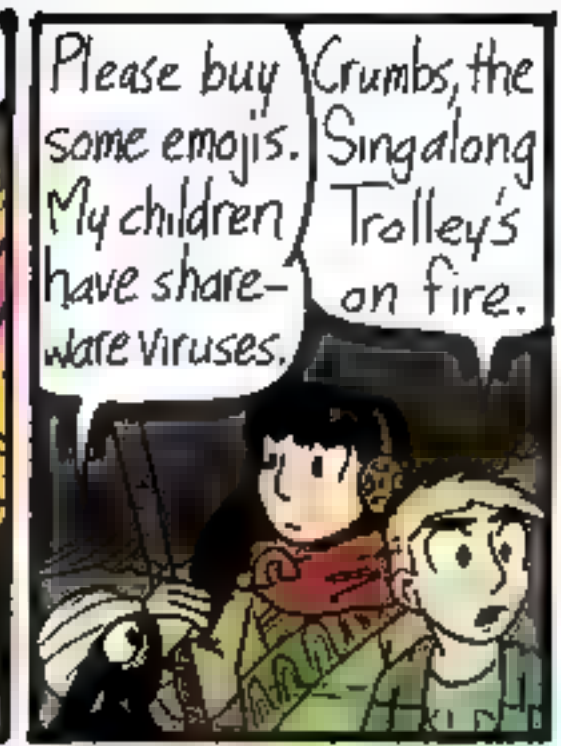
Normally, when I
interface with
software, I kinda...
take it over. My
cybernetics give
me control.

Whoa. Nick, most
of us can't do that.
You realize what
this
means?

Huh?

You've been
letting me
win at
video games!

Baron,
no one's
~~that~~ bad
at Lego
Batman.



Brave mercantile crow,
we seek the Tower

A terrible place. Surely
you'd prefer some
licensed phone
wallpapers?



Please. Our need
is great.

Very well. It's
this way, as
the crow flies!

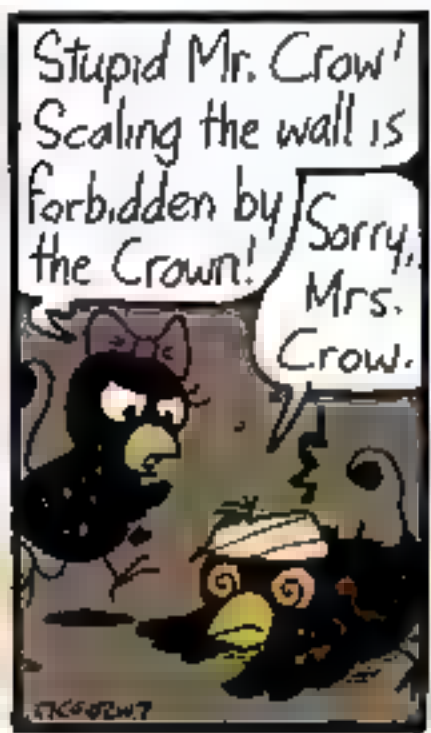


flap
flap
flap



We're gonna Customers!
need some Always so
non-bird picky-picky!
options!





You mentioned the Crown.
You have a queen?
Or a king? Nah, we
have a crown. The
Crown of Command.



The Crown controls
us. Tells us what
to see. And
sometimes shoots
us with lightning.



Think
the Crown
is in the
castle? Probably
This place
is still kinda
follows
Whimsy rules.



We'd
better
not have
to sing.
That happens,
I break out
Radiohead
and I don't
want no critics.



Checking
ner out,
huh?

I know it's
just an avatar
You think I'm
hard up?



You're riding
a un.corn.

Okay, fine. It's
weird being in a
human body again.



There's... ..but in a
stuff I Whimsy VR
can't help you can't do
thinking more'n kiss
about... anyway.



Can your
hero-of-the-
realm persona
reassert
itself?

You can't
even use
tongue! It's
gotta drive
you **nuts!**





New plan. Friend Nick,
We take you as
the Holiday
Rail. wise as you
are brave



Will it
get us
through
the wall? Sure Look,
we're going
in the
Dinosaur
Tunnel.



The
what? It's just a
bunch of old
plaster dioramas
They're the weakest
part of the park.



GROWL

You
mean the
non-VR
version? Friend
Nick, you
are a
dorkwad.



GRAAH

Gosh
darn.

Reverse!
Reverse!

SKREEE

This is
terrible!

I
know!

These dinosaurs are
from **completely**
different eras!

Use your giant intellect
to find brakes!

Good! We're turning
away from the T.rex
and toward the
peaceful
herbivore!



Well, maybe
it was
peaceful
before.

Don't drop
a train on
anything
with spikes!



We
aggro'd a
dinosaur!

I'll try to
pacify it!



Wait.
No.
Get it
madder!

No! Exact
opposite
of good
idea!



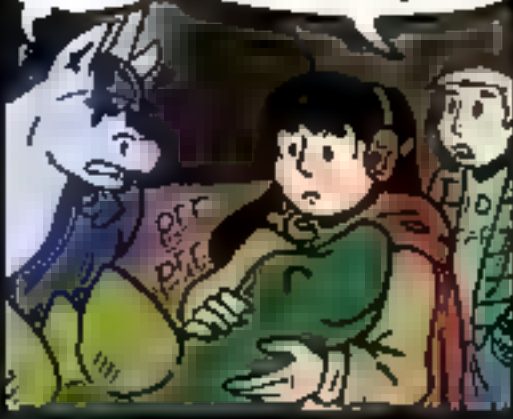
This is
sweet and
deeply
disturbing.

Forget what
I said!
Thou doth
kick butt!



What the blessed heck?

This game codes aggression as a simple eight-bit integer.



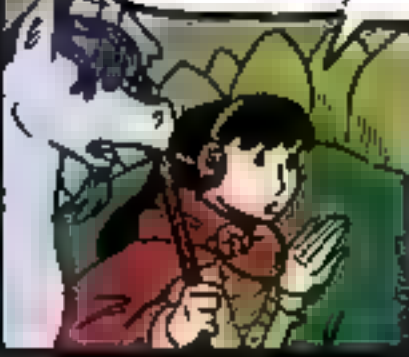
Oh! So when it hits its limit, provoking it more...

Loops it back to zero.



You abused it into liking you?

It's uncomfortably like some of my relationships.



Baron, you're a robot. Why don't you know coding stuff?

Why don't **you** know brain surgery?



Since this place is now attacking us, can we kill the session?

I've already tried.



Someone destroyed the ACPI code. We can't force shutdown without major data corruption.

Meaning?



Nick would be reduced to a brain in a jar, and you'd be a babbling idiot.



Not one word, Zerhacker.

I'd be fried, too, but one of my backup selves would try to reboot me.



Yes! It's

READER MAILBAG

time!

(Questions submitted by
our bars Patreon backers.)

Today's question comes
from Lancer LeRay,
and it's for Shaenon
and myself.

Hmm.

"What do you feel is the
most important thing
you've learned over the
course of your comics
career?"

Hmmmmmmmm.

Hold on.

SHUFFLE
SHUFFLE
slip!
THUD
SHUFFLE



Flip Flip
Flip

scribble
scribble

tap
tap
tap

Ahem.

"I think it's that the
amount of worrying you
do over any one strip is
not directly proportional
to its eventual quality."

What about
you,
Shaenon?

"Let Jeff
do the work."

Guys! T. rex
still on our
hinders!

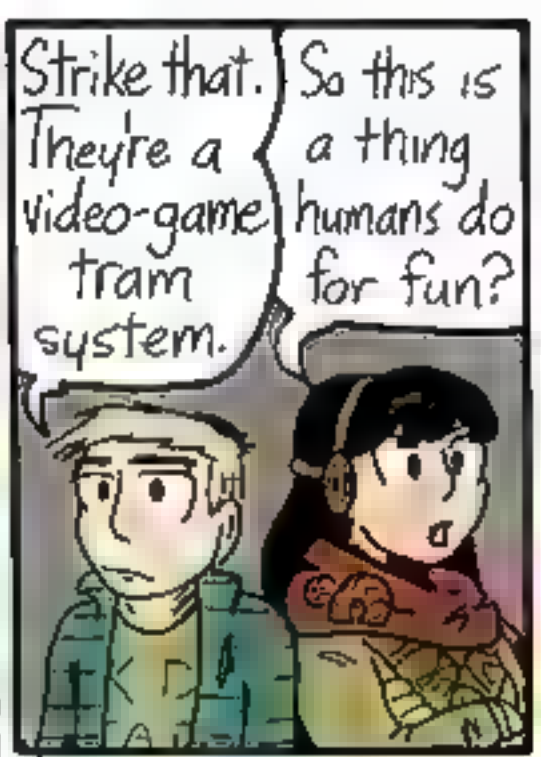
I shall hold the
beast at bay!
Just swear you'll
reach the tower!

Baron...this is
so brave...

And it doth
make my Twitch
channel go
bananas.

You've
been
streaming
this?

My followers
are most irate
at your
excessive
clothing!



Geez,
Baron's
completely
different
in here.

Deep down,
it's what
he'd like
to be.



You really
think the
VR, like,
grants
wishes?



Sure. Baron's
strong and
courageous, and
you're a stone-
cold babe.



And you
wanted
to be,
what,
insane?



I wanted to be
a Viking queen.
I'm the only
sensible one
here



Look, I dunno why
Whimsyworld made me
appear like
this.

Okay.



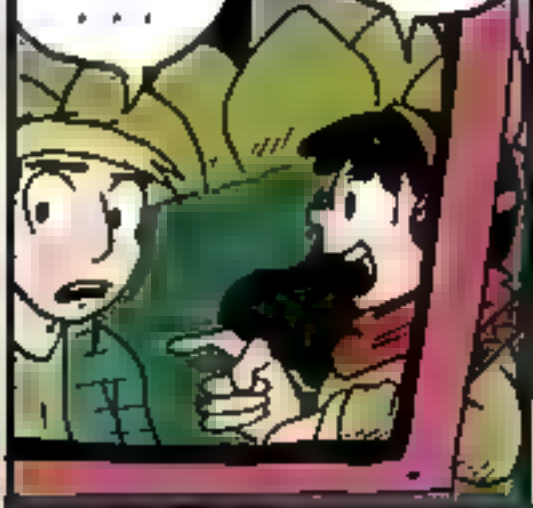
And if I have a
guess, it ain't
nobody's business
so back off.

Mm-hm.



There's
a
woman
...

**KNEW
IT!**



I'm crazy about her, and I think... maybe... she could kinda be into... argh, forget it.



I guess I think it'd be simpler if I was human. I can't give her what an ordinary guy can.



Ah, I know that feeling.

But maybe she doesn't **want** ordinary. Maybe she wants **extraordinary**.



Yeah, she did it with the world's two biggest sex machines. Thanks for the reminder.



Literal machines? That could work for you.

Finally!
End of
the tram!

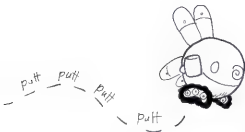
We're only
halfway
across
the
mountains.

Duh. This is
Colonel Quack's
Andes Adventure,
and that's the
Mag Mountain
Chute.

In the park,
Huh? they're two
rides. You
need separate
tickets.

This is
absurd!

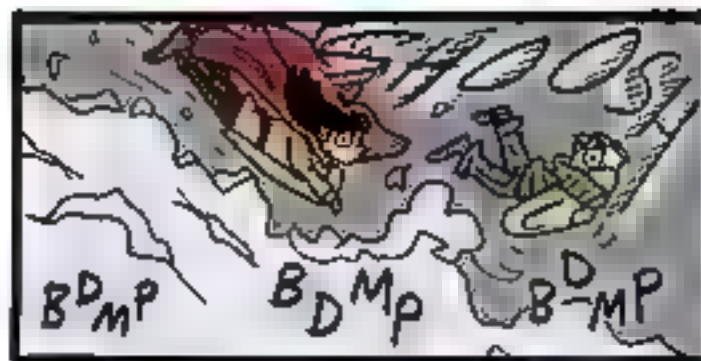
Yeah, the
All-Ride
Happy Pass is
a way better deal.





Grab a mask!
We'll luge
down!

Oh, this
is gonna
stink.



This is way
smoother
than the
actual
ride!

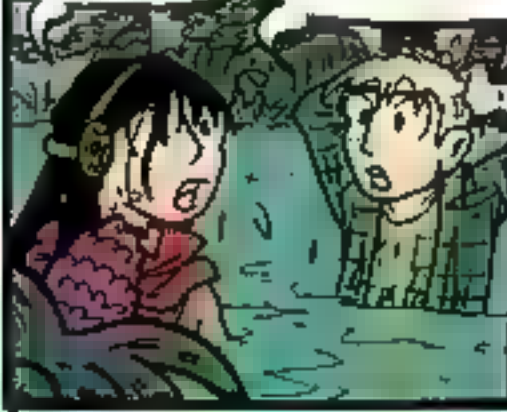
Try not
to land
on the
dinosaur!





A jungle? We seem to be going everywhere **except** the tower.

That's the idea.



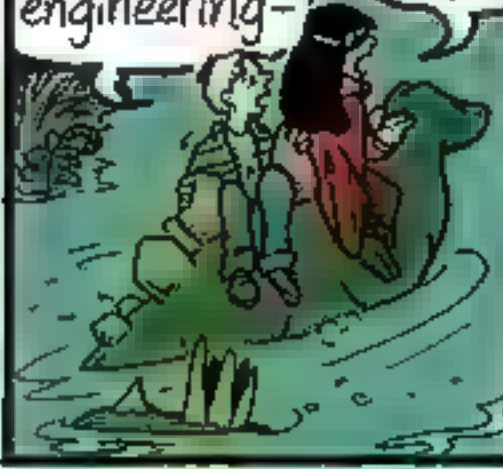
Whimsyworld's designed to lead you around the whole park in time-managed concentric circles.

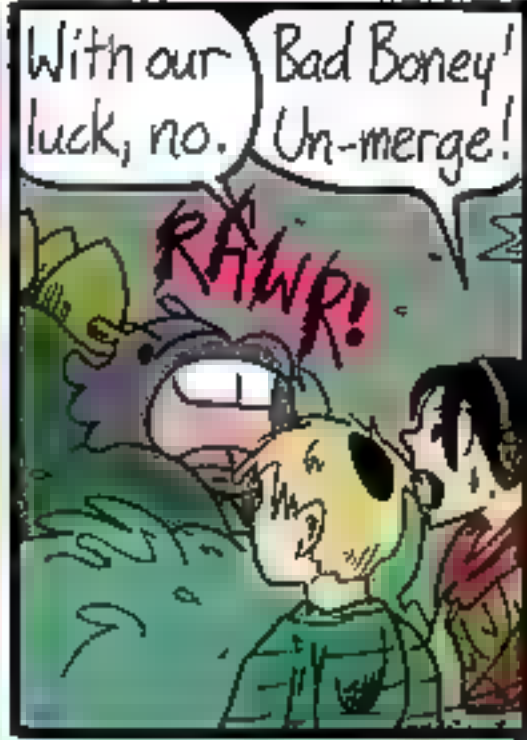


I hate Whimsy.

It's studied in social engineering-

HATE it.





Sorry for creating an
enraged stegosaurus-
hippo
hybrid!

It
happens!



Just hang on! A
riverboat is timed
to come through
here!

Good!



No, that's when
the **real** horror
begins.

What?



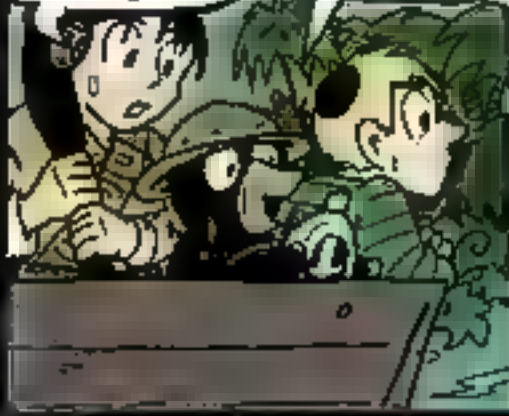
The
scripted
host
banter.

And there's a
hornbill! Looks
like he's **out
on a limb!**



Sir, can you get us out of this jungle?

Sure can, and I'm not lion!



Do you know the way to the tower?

Don't monkey around with that place. The Crown would go ape.



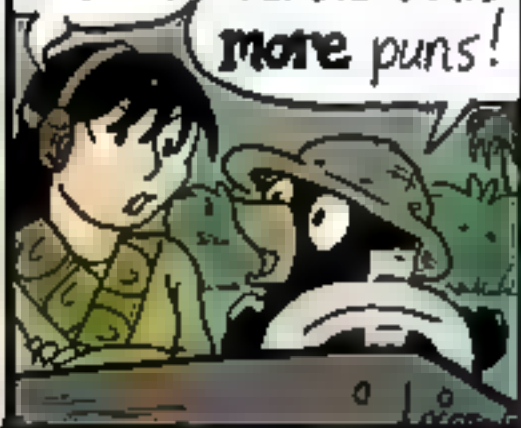
What **is** the Crown, exactly?

That's irrelephant.



Are the puns always part of the ride, or only the evil version?

The evil version has **more** puns!





Hey, "Owl" take that.
My shootin' iron is for
scaring hippos!



Why didn't you
use it when we
were being
attacked?



That was a hippo/dinosaur
hybrid.
Toad-
ally
different.



So what does
the gun actually
do to game
creatures?

Easy
enough
to find
out...



You made me
puma pants.

Stop! We need
him to steer!

If this gun disperses NPCs, it could be handy.

I thought you were a pacifist.



That's the beauty of gaming. You're just interacting with a program—



AUGH

the agony
the agony
on what a world



On second thought, you take it.

I've lost the will to pun.



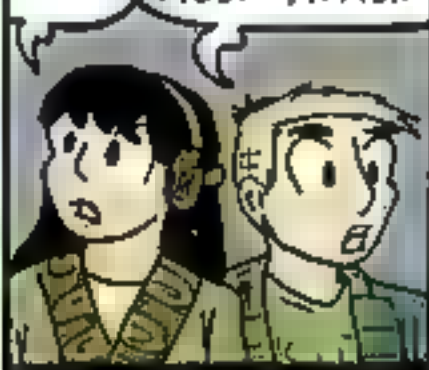
Now that I've
seen horror,
I may never
pun again.

Yes, that
would be
terrible.
See you!



Good
gravy,
that
was
awful.

Puts us in
a good place.
We can cut
through Wild
West World.



At least here, all
we have to deal
with are little
cow cowboys...

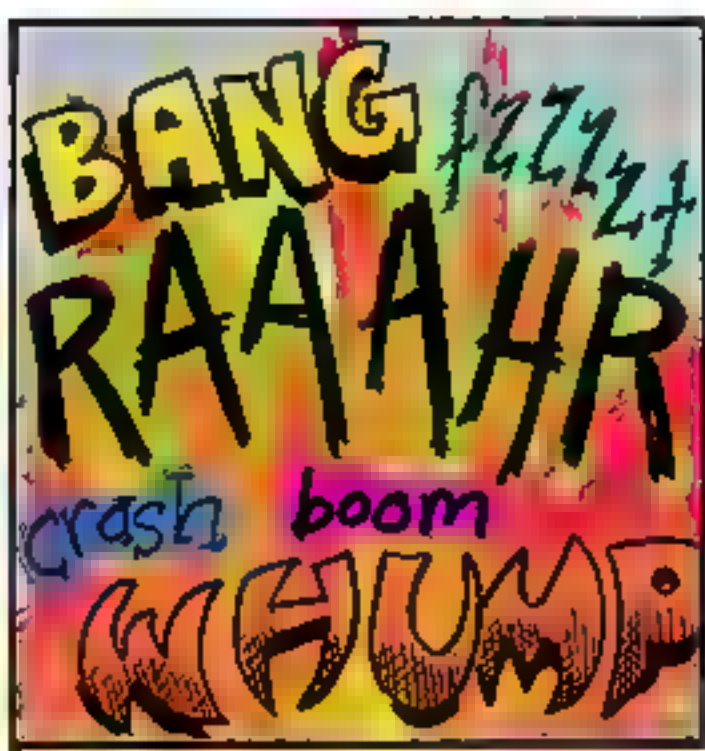


OH,
COME
ON!

There's some
wiggle room on
the theming!



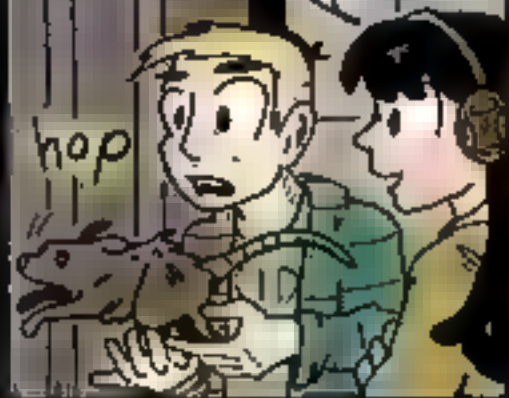








Okay, little rat. Get those keys from the sheriff! That's so clever!



SOVEEEAgh
CHAW
CHAW
CHAW



SNAP



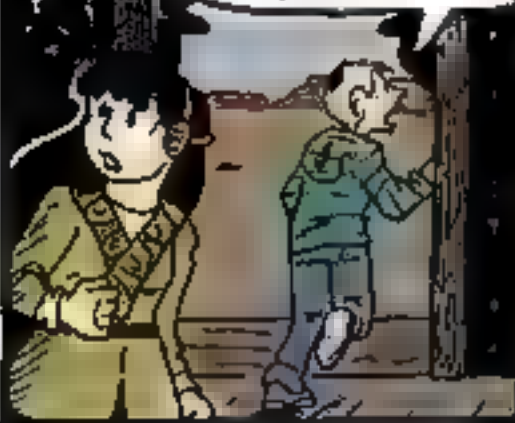
If gratuitous.

In the movies the mice just do a little song



Where's
the
gun?

No time to
look. Plus
that thing
creeps me out.



Conventional weapons
are useless from
here on out,
anyway.



I hope
you're
right.

Trust me. In
Future World,
it's a whole
new game.



I
give
up.

Hey, this one's
a cyborg.



I got an idea.
Remember the
stegopotamus?

=sniff=
Boney...



The data gets
corrupted when
you bring two
encounter
tables
together.

Yes,
and?



So, Frontier World
rat meets Future
World dinosaur...



SKREEEE

And the
plan
is...?

Sue me, I
didn't get
past "make
cool monster!"



Your AI duplicate is awfully hung up on dinosaurs.

Dinos are cool.



And we don't know Aimee's doing this. The game's full of crud I can't picture myself inventing —



BLAM



Doth I rack up the reptile kills or **what?**

Case in point.



Baron!
You're all
right!

How are
you holding
that gun?



Unicorn
magic, duh.

It's
good to
see you.



I think that's the
first time a woman
hath voluntarily
touched me.



Heh.
One of the perks
of herodorn.

What wouldst I need
to defeat to get
frenched?



Your urge
to ask that
question?

What say **you** to
a hug, Friend Nick?
Nay homo. Pass.
Checking the
Future World
terminals.

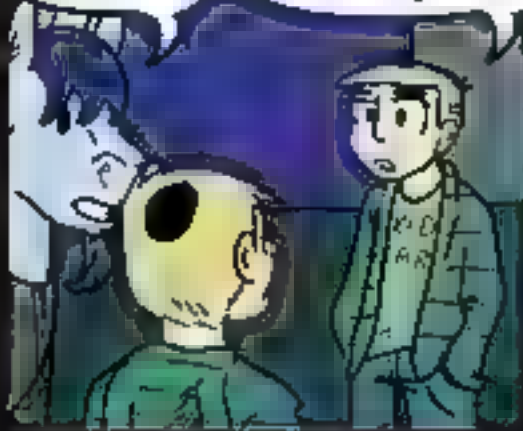


The game used this
as a save location.
If we can
access
backups... That may
not be a
good i—



Shoulda
gone for
the hug,
fam.

So I'm
guessing we
both regret
this move.





Okay, this was a mistake.

Gotta self-terminate. Baron, the gun?



They look alike! Which one is the duplicate?



Him.

Me.

How can I tell which one to delete?



It's him.

Hurry up and shoot me in the face!

Curse the burden of heroism!



Time was, he'd have just shot us both.

It's progress.

Crud. I really **do**
look like I
used to.

Don't remind
me.



Wait, this is
your old
human self?

Not a sexy
fantasy avatar?

What is this
glitch that
makes you

think this
is hot?



Glitch?
I was
created by
a tech
genius!

Yeeeah...
was he by
chance a
little skinny
nerdy guy?



I don't see
how that's
relevant.
Can I keep
you both?

Whatever
you're thinking,
we got **way**
too much
self-loathing
for it.



My organization helps newly created AIs. We can test you for sapience and—

Nan, I'm cool.

I'mo stay in the VR if it's cool with #1.

As me, you know my irritation's overriding my identity crisis.

Go, then! Be free! Dunno, are there Cheese-Its?

Find some! Live your grand adventure!

Yeah, and hurry it up, White Fang.



At least we gained the ability to duplicate objects.

Like that was worth having to talk to myself.

Verily! Unless we doth, like, World War Z the next barrier, what good are numbers?

Travelers! I have here twenty spheres. We compete to take the last one!

Math problems!

What kind of knight **are** you?

A smart one.

Two minus two is zero. The future-house wins again!



We take one to three balls each turn. Even though I go first, he always wins!



Psst. This is where duplicating objects could come in handy.



Hey, yeah.

Let me win.

Nice. Very Gordian.



Valor triumphs!
Onward!



Wait! We
never solved
the math
puzzle!

We'll do it on
paper later!

Who's "we,"
kemosabe?



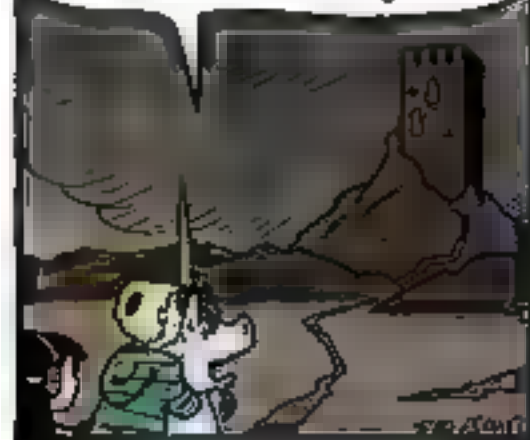
Can I at least
tell you about
Nim-values?

All I need to
know, milady, is the
value of my
awesomeness!





There's the tower!
None can stand
against my stout heart
and bazillion guns!



Yeah, I'd hold off
on the celebration

Thou jest! What
have we to
fear?



I rescind
my question
because
obvious.

Good. I'll save
my breath
to cuss
cutesily.



Dine on
lead,
foul
beast!

The gun won't
work. That
thing's coded
as landscape,
not mob.

What kind of
landscape shoots you
with laser eyes?

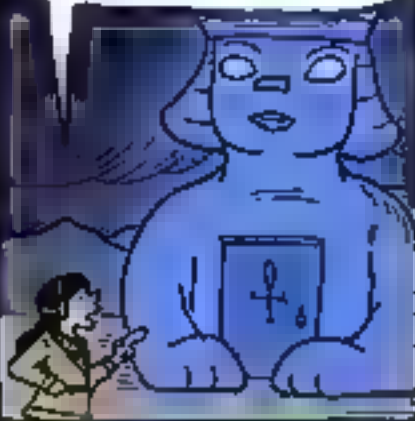
That is the
Antisphinx. From
"Arabian Plights."

You have to ask
it a riddle
it can't
answer.

Ho, Antisphinx! Which
chick doth Nick be
hottest for?

Fry him,
Antisphinx!

I know a word
of letters three:
Add two, and fewer
there will be!



my answer
is "hat"

Ha, no!
It's "few"!
Add two
letters and
get "fewer"!



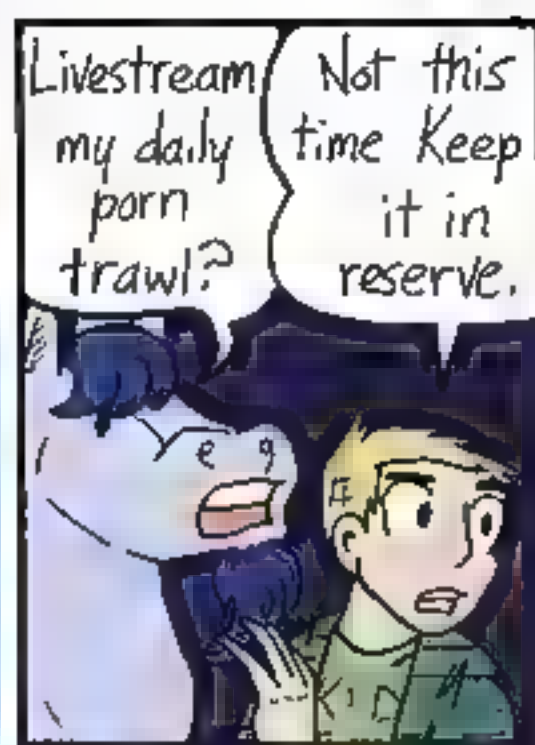
ZAP



It doesn't have to be
right It just has
to **answer**.

i had a
rhyme and
everything...





Okay, hold still.

Nick? Remember last time you fiddled with the VR code, ignoring my trepidations?



SYG 12/24/17



BOSS!

No, why?

It was ten minutes ago!







Classic Gish Gallop. The Sphinx can handle one query at a time...
...so we bombard it with questions and run. Okay, **go!**



U mad bro?

C'mon, Real Baron!

Or any of you! Not picky!



Whoo! Is this how hacking always is?

Pah. This is just **troubleshooting.**



Go, my doppelBarons!
Spread word of how
hard I
doth
own!

I'll need to
do **so** much
follow-up.

We're
creating
AIs
willy-
nilly.

We don't
know if
they're even
sapient.
They're code
objects.

Technically, I'm a
"code object."

You're different!
We care
about you!

Thou
hath
boobies!

There are
different
kinds of
caring!



Here we go. Final boss battle.

Can we not assume we gotta have a battle?

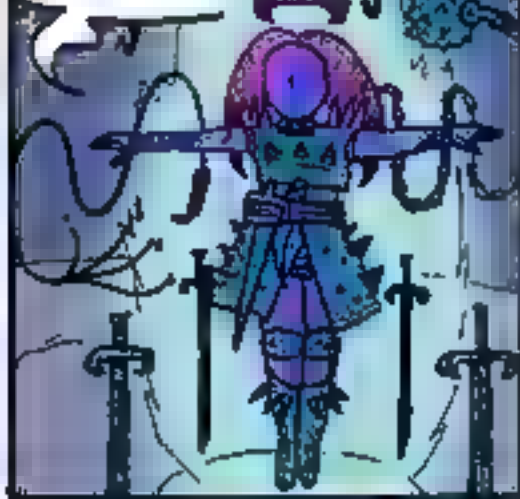


I cannot believeth I'm teamed with a pacifist gamer.



Guess what? Aimee's me. She's gonna have the same attitude-

Fly, you fools, from the Queen of Underland!



Different outfit tho.

If that's you, I have very confused feelings.



Baron and I will
hold her off.
You find Aimee.

You don't think
that's Aimee?

Aimee is based
on you. I can't
picture you
swaggering
around like that.

Your strategy is
avoidance.

Flight,
not
fight.

Oh,
and you know
my whole
psychology?

Remember when two
of you talked me out
of making
out with
you?

Fine, I'll
go find
her.





Oh, crumbs, it's Aimee! The real guy.



Yeah, um, this isn't really what I look like.

THIS IS NOT EVEN MY FINAL FORM.



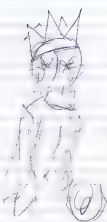
In real life I'm a tiltrotor aircraft.

Sorry. I thought we were doing Dragonball memes.



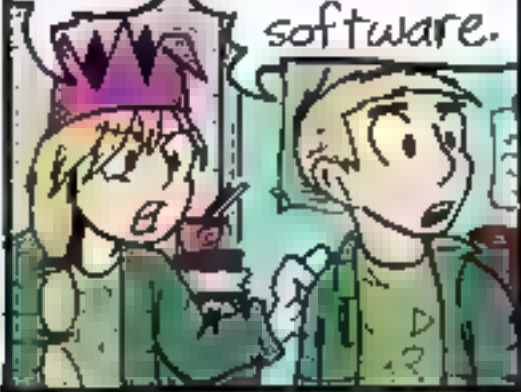
Aw, I missed my own anime reference.

I don't even **know** what you were quoting with the aircraft thing.



Did you
not get
the hint?
Stay
out!

Last time we
talked, you was
gonna look
into Whimsy's
mind-control
software.



Yeah, I found it.
And some other
stuff, like the little
fact I ain't
real.



Turns out I was
created by a
corporation to sit
around playing
video games.



...which
sounds
okay when
I put it
out there



I was created
to binge
Mystery Science
Theaters and
execute sweet
barrel rolls.

I didn't wanna believe
it was you trying to
kill us. I was **trying**
to keep you out!



This crown repre-
sents the brain-
control software.
I can't let it leave
this sim.



If I have to
stay here forever
and drive everyone
off in pain,
fine.



Yeah, them
jungle
boat puns
stung.

It hurt
me worse
to write
them!



We came here to help you, y'know.

Why? I'm a bad copy of a guy who was a loser to start with.



crud, you sound like me... Look, Aimee, I thought you were cool before I knew all that.



And you're still cool. So maybe we're actually kinda okay people.



You guys all feel that way?

Nick! We're here to trample the evil witch!



Yeah, but some of us ARE IDIOTS.

Nice try tho.

Aimee, listen. We can re-home you in a better sim.

"Better" how?

Whoa.

If I'm the same R&D code in a different program, how's that "better"?

Psst!
Nick!

What?

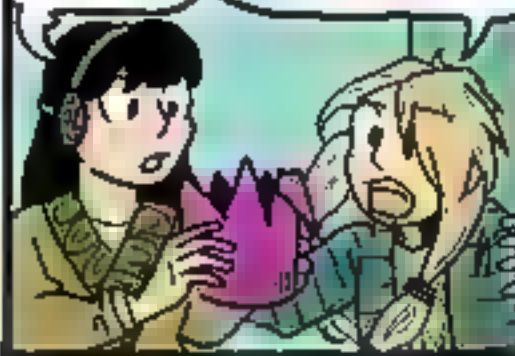
Girl-you is lovely.

"Better" is anywhere this talk ain't happening.

Quick! What are your turn-ons?

So this is the code that makes Nick not swear and Baron add "eth" to random verbs.

Yes! Don't mess with it!



What else can it do? Influence consumers. Edit perception. Make movies seem to not stink.



I don't even know the full extent.

You make me want to be a better person.



Wow. That's terrifying.

He's doing that on his own!



'Kay, this discussion is over. I'm ordering you all out.

Wait! Let me stay with you!



Knock it off, Baron. She's a computerized copy of **me**, remember?



And I'm a purple robot unicorn. Was there a non-weird way I was ever gonna get my freak on?



BTW, the only game I brought in is the new Mass Effect. **That** gives me pause.





You
wanna
sulk in
here?
Fine!

No! Heroes
don't leave
princesses
in towers!

I ain't a
princess!
Everybody
out!

Boop

Welp, that
was fun.
Imma go
troll Tumblr.

I already
miss your
other
personality.

Dont tell me you
wanna go back in
the sim.
...do you?

No. Aimee
made her-
self clear.



And she's right.
We gotta keep the
Crown away from
Whimsy no matter
what.



Tell Whimsy we
didn't find grits,
couldn't even get into
the sim. Convince her
to cancel research.



Then log
back in
to watch
"The Notebook"
with Aimee?

I sense
we got
different
priorities
here.



...and that's all,
ma'am. The sim's
completely borked.

Ah. What
a shame.

Yup.
Terrible. Then
my proprietary
user-influencing
software is
lost.

Yup.
Terrible. Ah well.
I'll go
ahead and
delete the
sim.

Wait!
That
is
terrible! Indeed, I could
have spent that
R&D money
on three new
tween pop stars.

What the hell?
You can't delete
VR Whimsyworld!

Whyever not?
It's a failed
project.

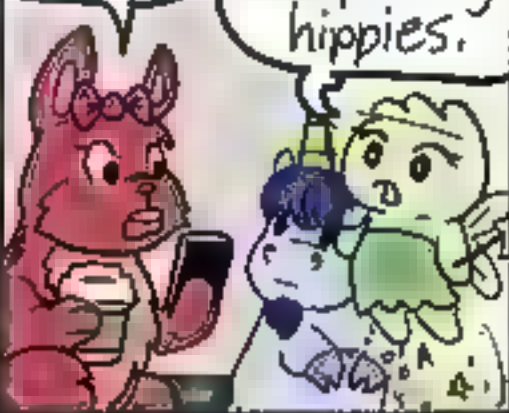


But...what if there
are sapient AIs
in there? With,
y'know, feelings like
you and me.



Ma'am, we need to drain
some wetlands for the
new Magic
Bay
Resort.

That's fine.
Shoot any
trespassing
hippies.



Feelings
like
me,
anyway.

I'll have
lovely feelings
when I see
my next-
quarter profits.



Nick! Nick!
Whimsy's gonna
delete the
sim!

Aw
bigwigs.

What now? We
gotta warn Aimee!

She don't wanna
talk to us.

Listen, dumbass. Aimee
coulda kicked us outta
the sim anytime. She

let us
find
her.

So, what, we
use the power
of friendship?

And goddamn
unicorn magic!
Do I hafta
beat it into
your ass?

There's
that
Whimsy
innocence

We'll log into the top-level sim, the VR apartment. I dunno if Aimee'll let us back into Whimsyworld.



We need something we can use to bargain with Whimsy. It could be small. It could be subtle.



Oh, hi, guys. Did I tell you I have the Crown?



It could be a big spiky purple thing.

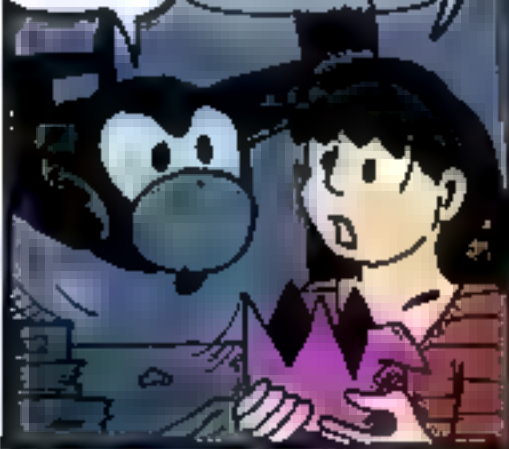
You're late. I've been here reading Aimee's Dragonlance novels.





You stole Aimee's crown!

I backed it up. Aimee still has hers.



I didn't see you make a copy.

How **physical** of you. I acquired the data when I touched the Crown.



These visual constructs are just for your convenience. Pure AIs don't need them.



For someone who doesn't care about physical forms, you manifest pretty hawt.

Mind your manners around a lady with a mind-control hat.



We can't
give
Whimsy
the
Crown!

It'll convince
her to
keep VR
Whimsyworld
running.



Yeah!
We
gotta
save
Aimee!

Aimee felt
it was too
powerful
to let
anyone use.



Even if
she dies,
guarding
it?

If she's
like me,
you can't
change
her mind.



Sure I can.
I have
the Crown.

This is
what we're
talking
about!



You're dooming Aimee
and any other sapient
AIs in the sim.

Arrgh... I gotta
side with Nick here.



Log me out.
I need a
drink.



So, so
physical.



I can't believe I just quit. I'm a Whimsy original!

I can't believe what you did on Whimsy's desk.



sk67m7

I been through Doc Collodi's death, corporate restructuring, the dark direct-to-video days...

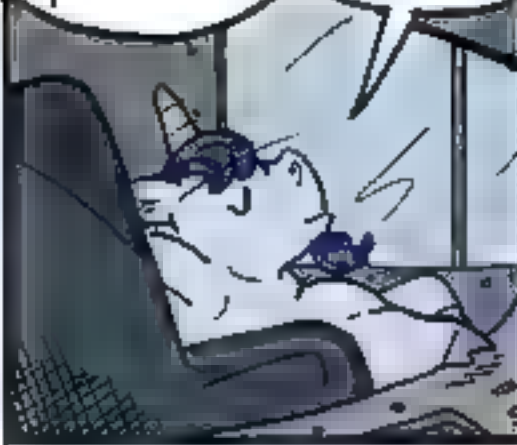


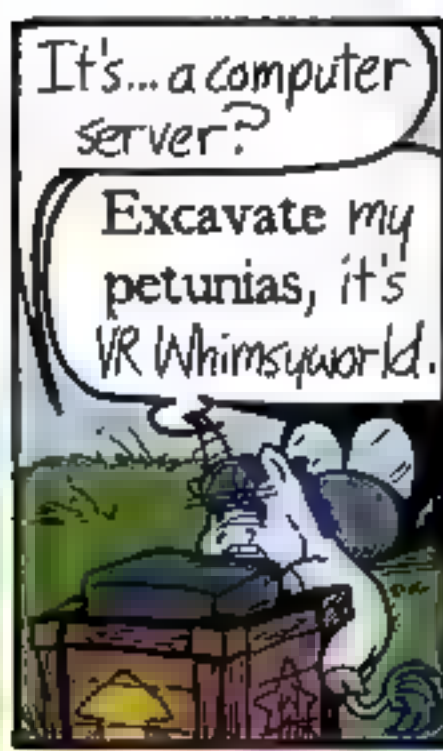
And **this** is my last straw? A chick I met in a vidya game?



No, I mean, how was that biologically possible?

Power of love, brah. QED.





I don't get
it. Whimsy
was gonna
destroy this
program.

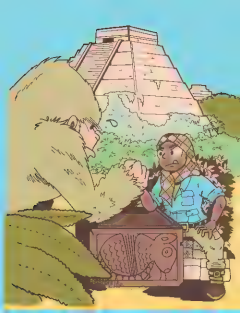
Lovelace
cut a deal.
She handed
over the
Crown.

But that
owns!
Aimee's
alive in
there!

And in
exchange,
the whole
crispy
world's in
danger.

Counterpoint:
I hate the world
and everything
in it

Now boot this up so
I can stand at the
login screen
with a
boom box. Sometimes
I envy
you, Baron.



I gotta talk to Lovelace.

She's off in the Intertubes by now. You'll never find her.

We need to discuss the Crown.

Also, I figured out how to beat that sphere puzzle.

Actually, that isn't possible using whole numbers unless you go second.

Knew it! Being wrong on the Internet is your Bat-Signal!

Argh! I can **hear** you using the wrong "your"!

Lovelace,
what the
puffin
?

My objective
here was
always to
protect Aimee.



Whimsy would have
rebuilt the mind-
control software
anyway. I was able
to add precautions.



Huh?
I used **my**
mind-control
software to make
Whimsy use **hers**
only for good!



This is
like a
turducken
of bad
ideas.

Really? I could
mind-control
myself to
exercise more
caution.



I did my best to minimize damage.

You can't just program goodness.



Why not?

For starters, look at **your** idea of doing good.



Hm.
You may have a point.



You'll pay **what** for the software? Yes, that's **very** good!

Anasigma thanks you, ma'am.



You went against Aimee's wishes!

Are you sure? You didn't bother to go back and consult her.



She won't let me hear me, I swear not to bug you with in-crap about the stupid Crown!



When did he turn into the decent one?



I don't know, but it's deeply unsettling.

LATER.

...and I'll
replace Wild
West World
with dinosaurs.

Aye, Wild
West World
doth suck
buttocks.



Then I gotta work
up the nerve to
open the gates. I
think a lotta Als
are gonna need a
safe haven.



And you shall
be their princess!
I ain't a princess!
I'm just a gal in
a crown who
rules a magic
kingdom and
rides a unicorn!



Yes, your
highness.

Aw,
go back to
meatspace.



At least
you can be
glad Aimee's
all right.

Okay, okay.
This thing
made me
face facts

I've got a real
love that gives me
meaning, and I've
been a fool not to
say something.

Wow.
Sure you're
ready for
that?

Ready
as I'll
ever be

...
yes?

Hey, Baltette.
You monkey-
chasers still
need wings?



Hey, let's see what Remy is up to!

Salt... laundry detergent... sage...



Remy? From the Cypress storyline?

High John the Conqueror root... dead alligator...



Unity's spare limb provider?

Huh? Oh, all right, Brian, **one** treat.



This comic has too much going on.

Finally, a quiet night in!



...
Come back tomorrow,
please. I have
posted hours.

I have possessed this
corpse to visit you...

I have to set
boundaries, and I'm
busy with-

YAUGH!

How 'bout I possess
this corpse instead?

I was making
a protection
charm for **just**
this kind of
thing.

Go on
with your
art project.
I'll talk



I'm a spirit. You're a hounigan. You have to help me.

Not by doing harm.



C'mon! Can't you curse the man?

That's a complete misunderstanding of voodoo.



We're not morbid. We help the lwa and the dead.



Is that box labeled "Misc. Body Parts 4U♥"?

These are very helpful to my dead BFF.



☠ In life I was ☠
killed by my wife, who
threw my body in the
polluted swamp outside.



The chemicals
dissolved my body,
leaving only
my spirit... ☠



...a spirit animated
by **revenge!**

Isn't that the origin
of Swamp Thing?



Really
showing
respect
for the
dead here.

No, this is good!
I have
experience
with swamp
things!



According to my chemical tests, you're some kind of sapient vapor. Not a true ghost.



There's an agency for beings like you, but I don't know if they're reliable these days.



How come?

Our superiors sent us another "Truth Obfuscators of the Month" badge.



Again? I'm all flaired out!

She keeps sending me these, and they disturb me.



Wait, there's a chemical test for ghosts?





This may be hard to believe, ma'am, but this alligator is one Godfrey Nebe.



That's right! The husband you **murdered!**



Offa my property!

Who are you?

Godfrey Nebe.

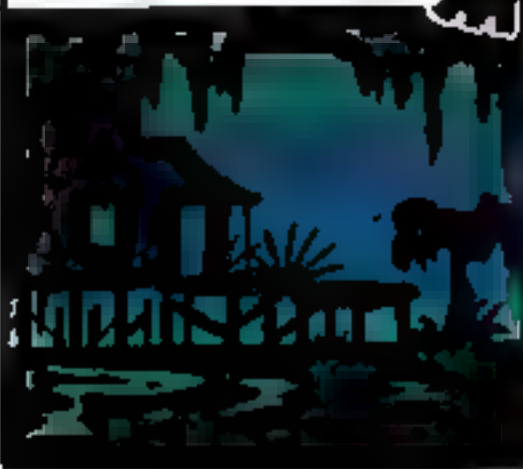


Okay, **really** hard to believe.

Told you we should've just eaten 'em.



"I recall that night.
Godfrey came home
drunk and I thought
he was CIA."



Dangit, woman,
you nearly
winged me!

Hands up,
spook!



"Didn't fare worse
than swallowing a
pint of bog
water, though..."



You
said she
killed
you!

I figured
she did!
That water was
disgusting!



Sir, ma'am, I'm afraid there's been some confusion.



A long-ago accident caused a swamp entity to be imprinted with Godfrey's personality. Now that we understand, I hope we can all work toward a-



And take your talking pet with you!

He's not my-
I'm talking to the gator!



So I'm not a ghost.
I'm a freak accident
trying to get
by.

That would've
been helpful
information.

What now? I'm
not even real!

I'm not an
authority on
what's real and
what's not...

But when you
meet one on a
dark street, there's
nothing more real
than an alligator.

Thanks. Mind
if I haunt
you awhile
'til I get
on my feet?

If you
can share
a bathroom
with a
zombie hand.

Pl. 10/10/10

10/10/10



10/10/10



10/10/10



10/10/10



10/10/10

10/10/10

10/10/10

10/10/10

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10/10/10

10/10/10

10/10/10



10/10/10

10/10/10

10/10/10

10/10/10

10/10/10

10/10/10

Hey, Cap'n Fabulous.
What's turned that
smile
upside
down?

The job,
I guess.

Our work gets
scuttled by the
higher-ups. How
can we tell if
nonhuman rights are
making any progress?

Dunno. I'm too busy
following that bill in
Vermont to give
beast-men
the vote.

What?!
Let me see!

...That's an app
for designing
sandwiches.

Well, I'm not
obsessed.

Don't get too excited.
That bill
is gonna
die in the
legislature.

Still, we
ought to
be there.



Doing what?
The 'Feds can't
interfere in state
issues, and, oh, we
officially don't
exist.



If you can find
a way around
that, you're
welcome to it.



Sweetheart
may have
been right
about this
plan.

Name
seven
problems
with it.



We need pithy hats
or something. Sandwich
boards aren't exactly
à la mode.



Who died and
made **you** king
of fashion?

A man named
Tremontino.



My fashion
nemesis. The
ceremonial title
was passed on
to me.



Dag, you're
right. This doesn't
taste like ice cream.

Technically
he didn't
die, but his
Met entrance
did.



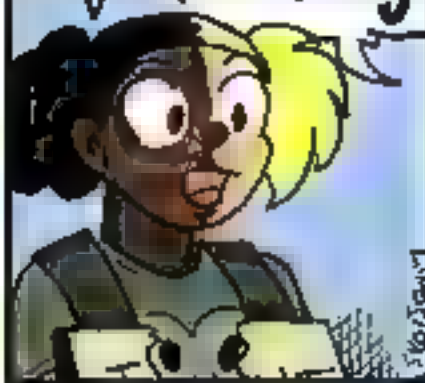
I didn't know you had a nemesis besides, like, all your other nemesisses.

We have a rivalry based on respect.



Ooh, like Hall and Oates!

We trade outfits by mail. His wardrobe is **stunning**.



He's bailed me out of many a fashion emergency, but he demands his pound of flesh.



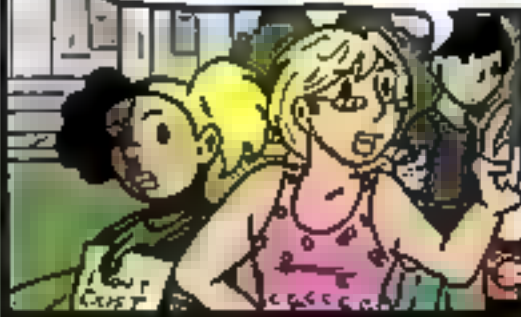
Well, sure. Who doesn't want a pound of flesh?

I sold plasma to him for a James Galanos.



So you gonna get your frenemy to mail you a campaign dress?

No need. Tremontino lives here in Vermont.



That's suspiciously convenient, but I'm good at ignoring stuff!



Let's get you dolled up!

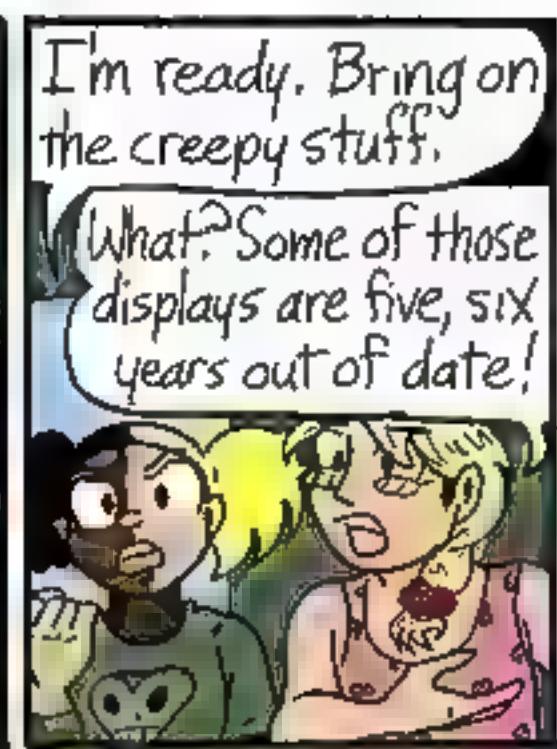
Get **us** dolled up.



So good at ignoring!

Election season is the **best** fashion season!







Ain't nobody
here
but the
creeptastic
mannequins.

He's here.
I sense the
presence of
a master.



He better show up
before somebody
steals
something.

Oh, very
well.



Helloo.



Ahh! Look
what
you
made me
steal!

Fashionably
late in your
own shop! My
hat would be
off if hats
were in.



Mr. Wilkin! How heavy hangs the hairdo of the Most Fashionable Man?

Why? Gunning for the title again?



A young man's game. These days I'm a consultant.

Perfect! Unity needs to fancy up!

huh?



A challenge! She has the ultimate combination skin!

But- I know!



I'll never forgive this trickery, and also I want a hat.

Worth it



I'm not a dress gal. How about that schmanancy suit?

Quite an eye you have.



Thanks. It's from a guy in Jersey

Not **that** suit. One, we can't afford it.



Two, it's tailored to me. Tremontino made it to tempt me from women's fashion.



And three, please please PLEASE dress up PLEEEEZ?



My friend, you are a joy to manipulate.



I like your super-creepy friend. What's his angle?

To clean me out.

For each perfect dress, he demands at least two in return.

How many for that man suit?

I feel queasy just thinking about it.

I feel the same way about my lunch.

Yes, I feel queasy thinking about your lunch, too.

Man, you don't buy plutonium, you just rent it.

Babe!
You joined us!

Don't "babe" me!
Are you shopping on our office's dime?



I got a campaign dress!

I demand you pay back whatever that cost!



SWAK



That's one way out of a reprimand.

Think how much she'll plotz when you give her two dresses!





Sorry, ma'am. What Unity **meant** to say was that we've used only personal resources.



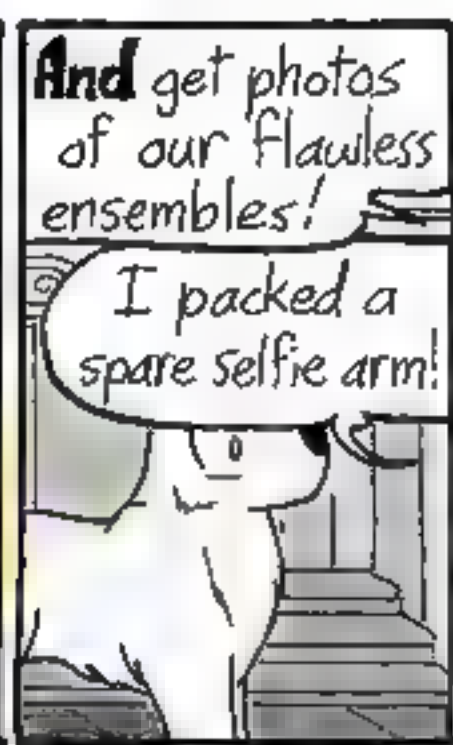
That said, this trip **was** unauthorized. We await disciplinary action.



Gotta say, toting babe around is pretty light discipline.

If you're okay with this, stay perfectly rigid.





Let's canvass Greenbank's Hollow. It had reports of nonhuman activity before the explosions.

Explosions?



We'd better talk to the human locals and get info.

BOOM



TWANG

Oof!



Right after we clip a stronger lunge line to your belt.

I'm okay!
Just need a new spine is all!





Who are you people?

I'm a psychologist, but that's not why you need me.



We're here to support transgenic suffrage.

Unnecessary, thanks.



Any day now, the Golden Ones will take us in their UFOs.

Tip! He **does** need your psych help!



See, cuz he's cray-cray.

The sensitive term is "special cray needs."





I'm Tony. Most of my people are geneticists, but my boyfriend and I practice cosmognothics.



Who's got two thumbs and digs gay marsupials? This gal!



This is Unity, our, um, specialist.



And this is —

AAAH
HOMOSEXUALITY



This isn't helping my mistrust of government.



Oh, wait, I got three thumbs today.



That cop is always
oddly unfazed by
talking
opossums.

Reality
blindness.



Some people see
only what they
want to. Must
be nice, I guess.



Ah, so it's a known
phenomenon. I guess
you get humans
asking if
you want
scritchies?



Yup.
You?

It's odd I **do** want
how many scritchies,
try to but that's
eat me. not the point.



Thanks for showing us your lab.

Save it. You'll want to talk to the boss, not me.



Um, okay. I'll be pleased to meet him.

Oh, he's pleasant. Here he comes now.



Why, Anthony, look what you've brought to our door.

Federal agents!



Downgrading from "pleased" to "ambivalent."

Ms Fancy, whatever you rolled in smells **divine**.



We absolutely must
brunch. How does a
dead moose sound?

Can it, H.T. You're
not here to be social.



No, but you're here
to influence
isn't the nonhuman
it suffrage
fun? referendum!



True.

Aha!

Um, babe,
so are
we.



Yeah, but
we're
not all
smug
about it.

Can I get
in on that
dead moose
deal?



Did you resolve
your little...
noise complaint?

Yes...

Excellent. Let's
have no more
disruptions,
shall we?

But our
orgone
accumulator--

My dear
Anthony, I
would **hate**
to see you
in arrears.

Quick
question, H.T.
Can you ever
not sound
sinister?

I enjoy...
carrots.

Wow.
So nope.

Anthony's people were abandoned by the lab that produced them. I found them squatting in this ghost town.



Together, we're bringing new life to Greenbank's Hollow!



tony!

hi tony!

we love you, tony!

tony tony!

hi!



Both figuratively and literally.

I preferred my home deserted and creepy.



Dude! One of the
What's with the cute opossum
the cute scientists
turtles? made them.
I saw potential.



To raise funds, we're
carefully training
them up as charming
house pets.



Isn't that right,
little one?



Some trainers are more
careful than others.





MAILBAG TIME!

Questions submitted by Patreon backers ♡



Tony mentioned
"Cosmognothics."

Anthony and his
little friend have
invented a religion.



Life partner!
And it's **science!**

Yes, let's not
scare off the
guests.



I realize we've had
our differences, agents.
Let me mend fences
with a night of
rural hospitality.



He's
gonna
kill us.

Oh yeah.

I can't wait
to show you
our many
crawlspaces!



You can
spend the
night in
our rustic
bungalows.

That's all
you're up to?
Breeding
pet
turtles?



Thus demonstrating
how NtS communities
can contribute to
human society.



I wish
to prove
we
deserve
suffrage



But you're
evil and
stuff! What's
your villain
plan?



Your showers have
no conditioner.



AIEEE!

Calm down, Tip!

Sorry my
awesome
kissing
flipped you
out, babe.

What? Me?
That?
I hardly
noticed!



In fact, I'm so
unfazed I'm going
out with H.T.
tonight!

Er.
Really?



We'll have regional
cuisine and listen
to jam bands!
Unity can bond
with the opossums!



In all seriousness,
is she going to kill me?

Could be. Do the
possums have
Jenga?



Unity, check on Sweetheart. Make sure she's okay.

Yeah, good call.



You think so? Sure! H.T. is a totally evil cartoonist with some pet turtles.



Now he's gone off in the night with our crazy-eyed war dog.



Unity, check on H.T. Make sure he's okay.

I'mo ninja up and watch the makeouts!



Excuse
me?
Dr.
Wilkin?

Oh, Tony.
How can I
help you?



I want to help
you—with
Cosmognothics!

You think I
need help?



Well, yeah. You're a
big white guy in a
dress. Is insulting
people part of
Cosmognothics?



Who can
say? Our
ways are
mysterious.

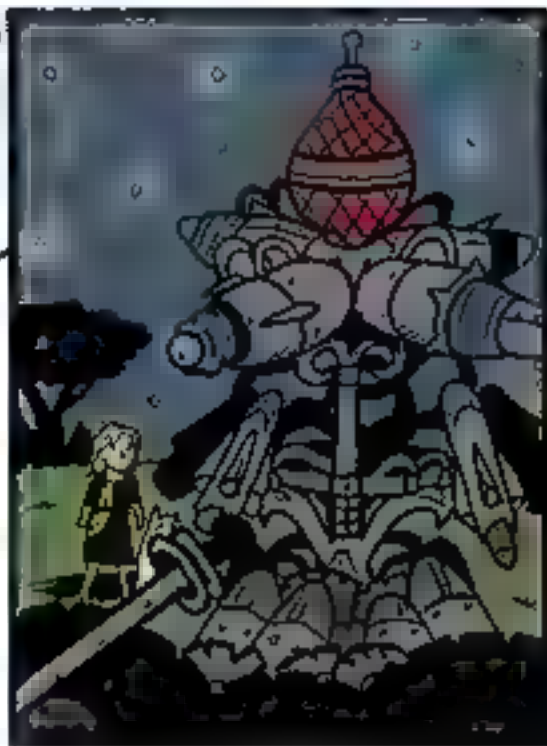
On well, I've
gotten worse
from the
Methodists.



What **is** Cosmognothics,
exactly?

We seek
elevation.

In, er, what sense?
Spiritually or
mentally or--



Ah. Literally.

Wait 'til we get
the sacred
antigravity
drive going!



Tony! Love!
You've brought
a visitor!

Amazing.



Hey, Mercutio. I want
to show Dr. Wilkin
the Groovitron.

I'd love to see it
up close!



Far out! You'll be
glad to know I
fixed two of the
three explosion
issues!



I'd love
to see it
from far
away!

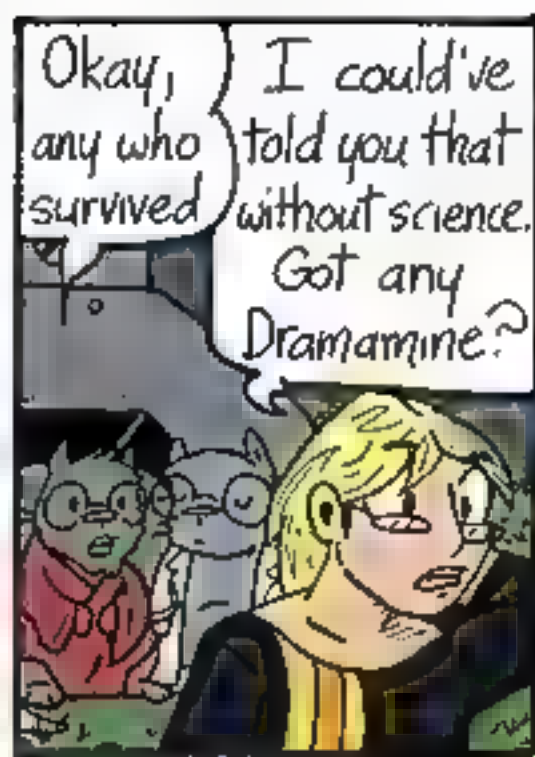
Are the
straps still
inescapable?

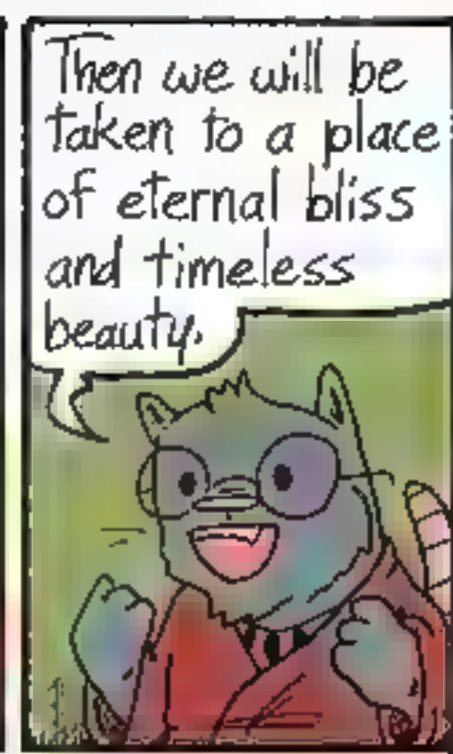
Yes!

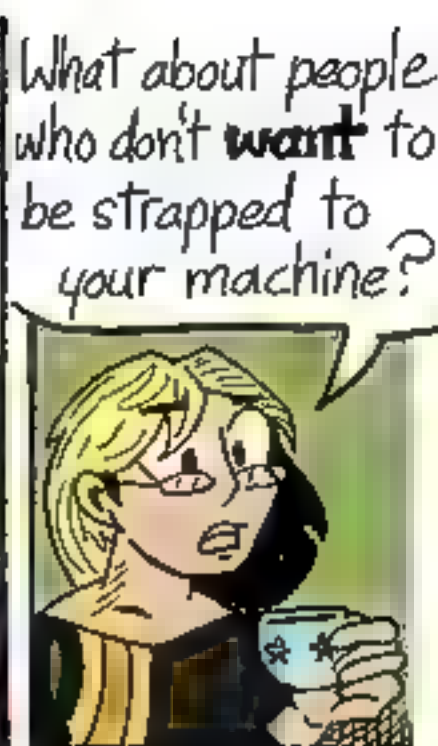




boom







Hoping for a better world is fine, but don't forget about this one.

You mean the voting thing?



You sound like H.T. All hung up on how we look to humans.



If we cared about looks, would I date someone with this haircut?

Hey! Half of 'em are blind to us. And the rest ought to be open-minded types, right?

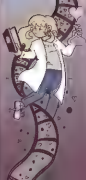


Beat it. We don't serve talking animals from the explosion lab here.

But I want churros!



was invited



by the

author's





Pardon us, H.T.
We need to visit
the girls' room.



But I already
peed on all
kindsa stuff.

We don't have to
use the facilities.



It's code for
talking about
private lady
business.



Works
better
with
indoor
restrooms.

Ew. I already
passed on
peeing in **those**
gross things.



Unity, I need advice.
How do you make
dating look so
easy?



Chill and roll with
stuff. Like how this
outhouse comes with
free sports drinks.



That's not...
never mind.

The point is, I'm
an expert at kisses,
so just do what
I do.



Got it.

Are you
chewing
on my
head?



Yeph. You
feeling
the luff
tonight?



Another explosion?

We were showing Dr. Wilkin how—

I told them go on disturbing the peace!



The nonhuman community can't afford negative press!

At least until this proposition passes!



It feels weird agreeing with you.

According to Ms. Fancy, I'm good now!



NETWORKING with ROBIN

at the National

...



He's a f.
has a f. who
p. 6.00

no
no
no
no

And, uh, this man
animated your favorite
Disney movie...



Let's go out
to the lobby
for a r.

SCREE



On the f. 6.00

He's a f. who
p. 6.00

no
no
no
no

Sweet! A splodey
danger machine!

It's not sweet!
It's jeopardizing
the suffrage vote!



It's clear what
needs to happen
next.

Absolutely,
H.T.



Dismantle the
machine!

Stellar
new
wardrobe!



Find two
nice girl
opossums
for them
to settle
down with!

Let me
add
the vote
is next
week.

They're rodents or
something, right?
They could raise
like six families
by then!



Sweetheart, can we at least respect our clients' sexual identity?



You don't get it.

It's hard enough to be respected as a nonhuman. You can't run around adding...



other stuff.

I'm thinking of their basic welfare.



So am I.

You want to give them makeovers.



Merc and his coconut-shell beads must be separated at any cost!

Believe it or not, I support Mr. Wilkin's plan.

Yes!
Makeovers!



Not quite. Our little community has attracted too much attention as it is.



Make the opossums stand out **less**, not more.

Erm...
huh.



So... make...
unders...?

Wow,
you're looking more
serial-killery than
ever.



Wait, now
you want
to make
us **less**
fabulous?

Just until
suffrage
goes to
vote.



Otherwise, H.T
wants to dismantle
your machine.

Why are you all
obsessed with
appearances?



Cosmognothic
teaches **inner**
fabulousness.

I hear, but I
don't understand.



On the inside, I'm
killing this lab-coat-
and-soda-bottle-
specs

You are, hon.
You really are.



I can't do it! I can't
make someone look
plainer!

Thanks
for the
effort.



No. This
isn't over.

Tremontino's!
Your heart's
desire... for
a price.



I need to make
two opossums look
less wonderful.

Ah, the sweet sound
of desperation.



Cut out psychedelics.
That worked last time

I found
an opossum
attractive. It's a fashion
emergency!
Is nothing
sacred to you?



HOokay! Let's go do
our practice date!

Wha? Huh?
Now?

We'll eat steak and
talk love tips.

Well...if it's to
assess local
opinions...

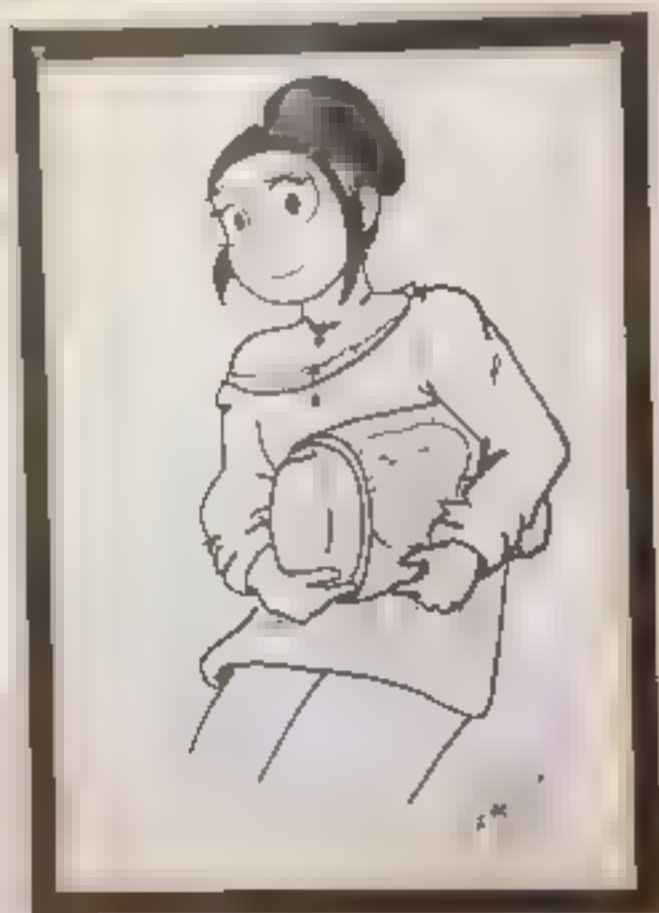
Sure! Let's ass up
some opinions!

"Assess." Now where
are my flowers?

Flowers?

You didn't
bring flowers?
What kind
of fake date
is this?

I could
arrange
some toes
into a
courage-y
thing.



It's crucial
that this
date have
Verisimilitude.

Welp, that's
a prob
'cause I
don't feel
sick.



I mean you have
to be H.T. as
much as
possible.

Oh! Okay,
one sec.



run run
CRASH

CRASH

tinkle tinkle
run
run
run



I don't
think H.T.
is quite
so
literal.

For a small
town, they
got a well-
stocked natural
history museum.



What can I
get you two...
you two?

Ah, garçon.

What wine would you
suggest for a tiger
who hated humans but
now sells them
turtles?

Unity...

It's okay, we get
that question a lot.
It's the red
blend.

Red as a virgin's
blush.

Exactly!

This is
working
too well.

You know H.T., huh? He's a regular here. Great guy.



I was skeptical at first, but he helps keep the opossums in line, and I love my new turtle.



Aw, I got one too!



The turtles are having a better date than I am.



Beat it, chum.
I'm in training
here.



Rude to waitstaff?
That's a practice
date no.

He was
horning in!



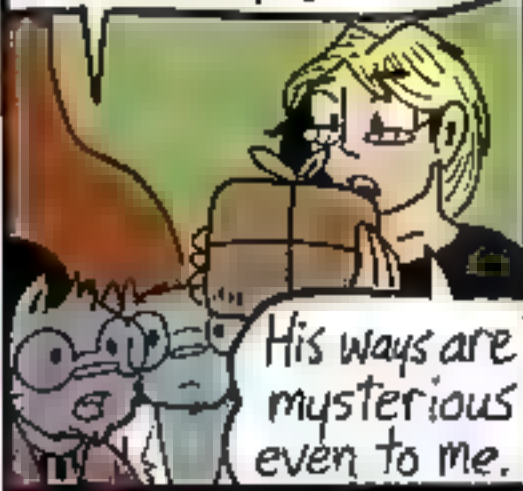
You want me to
let him smuggle
you off to some
exotic pool boy
resort? :



Dag, babe, you have
the **best** paranoid
fantasies. They're a
carefully curated
collection.



Your designer friend
mails things
suspiciously quickly.



His ways are
mysterious
even to me.

I will be **cross**
if I just traded
an embroidered
midi for nothing.



It's to save
the Groovitron.

Your sacrifice lets
us keep watching
the skies.



Right. Let's
open it.

On second thought,
what if it's mixed
plaids? I can't look!



God, there had better
be life on other
planets.

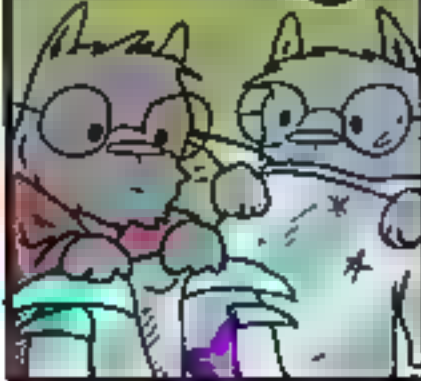
Ooh, shiny!
I mean, I like it, but weren't you supposed to make us stand out **less**?



"My dear Tip:
We cannot make our clients into something they are not."

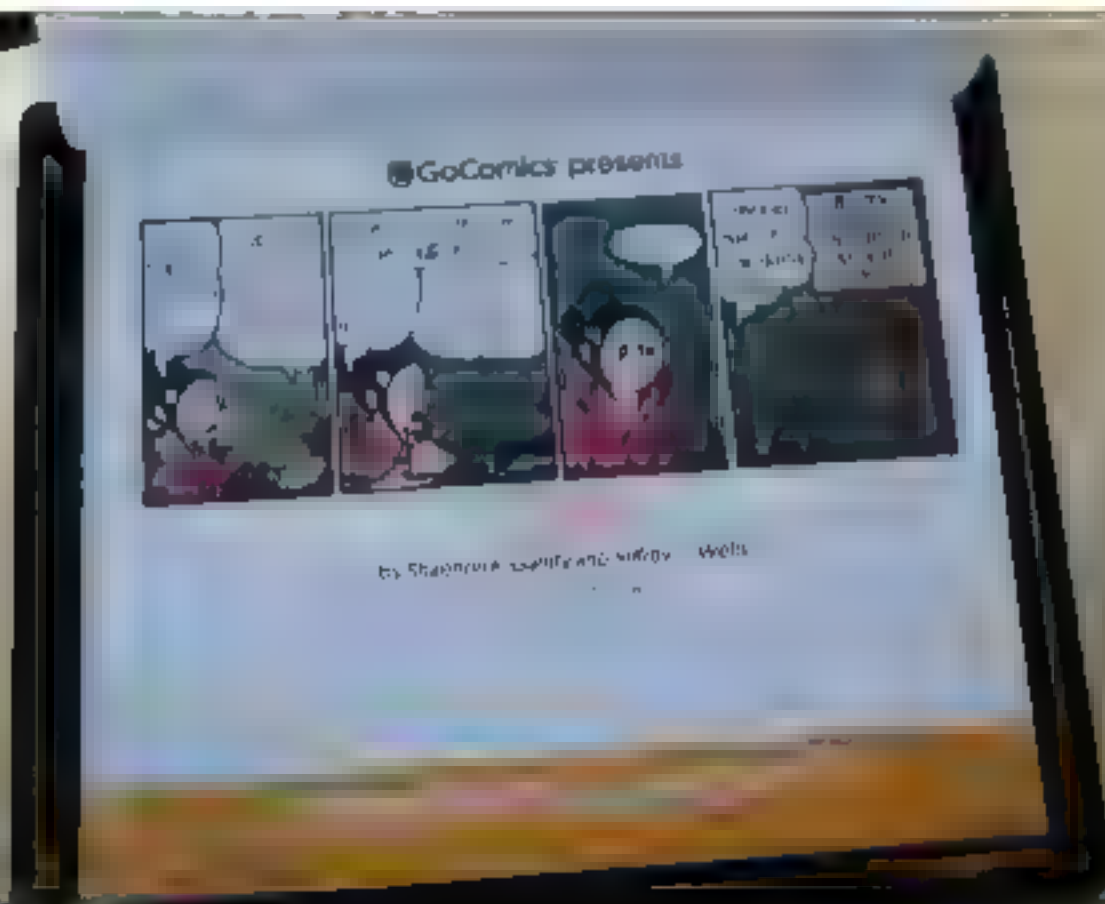


"All we can do is outfit them fabulously for what they are."



Your friend is a prophet of the truth.
No, because he goes on to say a good tuxedo would flatter me.





I believe
I'll have my
steak rare
and from a
water buffalo.

You don't
have to be
exactly
like H.T.

Then I'd like to
stay for coffee and
a crème brûlée.

In fact, um,
you could just
be Unity...

This will be the
perfect distraction
while my plan to
conquer Vermont
unfolds!

Um, if I'm being Unity
again, I'mo suggest
we check
on H.T.

Check,
please!

After much sacrifice,
I stand at last
on the cusp of
victory.



It's been a wrench
to toe the human-
mandated line, but
it's for the freedom
of all transgenics.



Good news,
H.T.!

We've decided
to be even
weinder!



And they're so
very grateful. We
were on the fence,
but then Tip brought
out these hats!



I'm convincing them to make Cosmognothics less...explosive.

Yes, that's worked so well before.



What **is** it with Skin Horse? Why must you stymie me at every turn?



It's enough to make one want to... to...

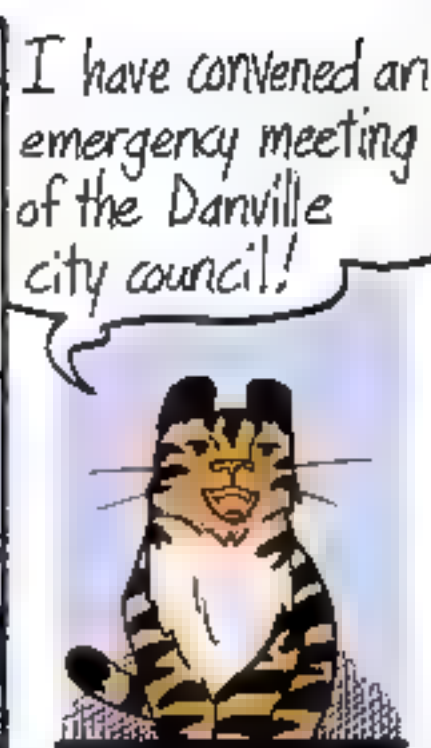
Rampage?



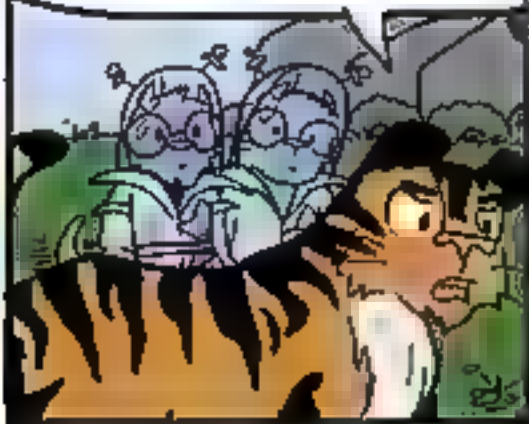
It's one thing when you talk **me** into it...

I try to be the change I want to see in the world.





Yes, this tears it.
I'm advising the city
council to tear
down the Groovitron.



Wait. That's all
you have planned?

I'm sorry, but
it's too disruptive.



What about the
turtles? They're
dangerous, right?

I suppose they
could give one
salmonella.



I don't believe it.
He's outsmarted us
again.

Yeah, I ate
like six
turtles.







Tony and
Merc ought
to like these
charities.

Yeah, they
look like
a blast!



Maybe
a bad
choice
of words.

What? Some
of these
opportunities
are **hot!**



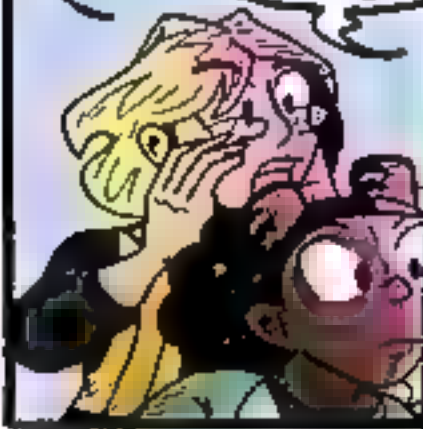
Seriously,
stop.

They're
ready to
explode all
over the
community!



Tony! Mercutio!
Turn the machine
off!

Nothing
doing!



But
the
vote—

Oh, that's doomed.
With the next
real crisis, our
so-called rights
will vanish



You keep dangling
them like string
and pulling them back.
We won't play your
sick game!



Tony, that's
crazy talk!
The string
game is
awesome!

Please try
not to
explode on
anyone's
lawn!



Don't throw your lives
away on nonsensical
dogma!

Don't worry
about us! We're
going to a funkier
place!



By the way,
Pavane thinks
you're hilarious.



Wait.
What?

Who's
Pavane? The bees who
talked to me
when I blew up
America with
a volcano!



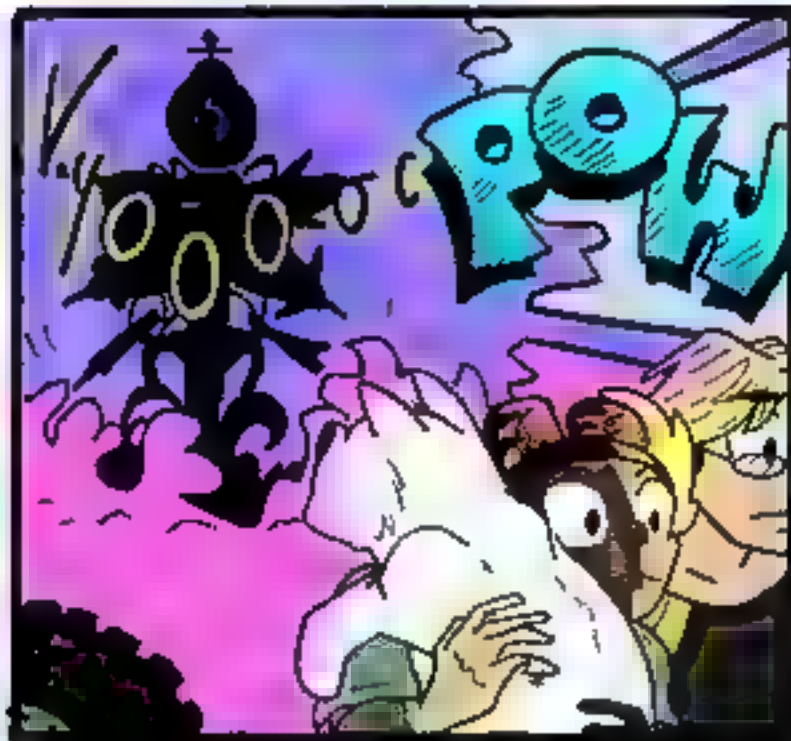
Sure, and **our**
thing is nonsense.

Ha! I get it!
Dogma!



Wait! How do you know my VR delusion and what did she say about me?

No time, babe! Going criti—



Another successful Skin Horse mission!

We weren't even **on** a mission!

On the plus side, this saves demolition fees.



What in **blazes** happened here?

Your rogue element eliminated itself.

Gather the rest of the opossums. I see a teachable moment.

Right.

In the struggle for equality, intolerance in our own ranks may—

THIS is what becomes of those who cross me!

Nice to be on opposing sides again.

You'll still campaign for the vote with me, yes?

No sign of Tony and Merc,
dead or alive.

Maybe they really **are**
on a sweet cosmic voyage.



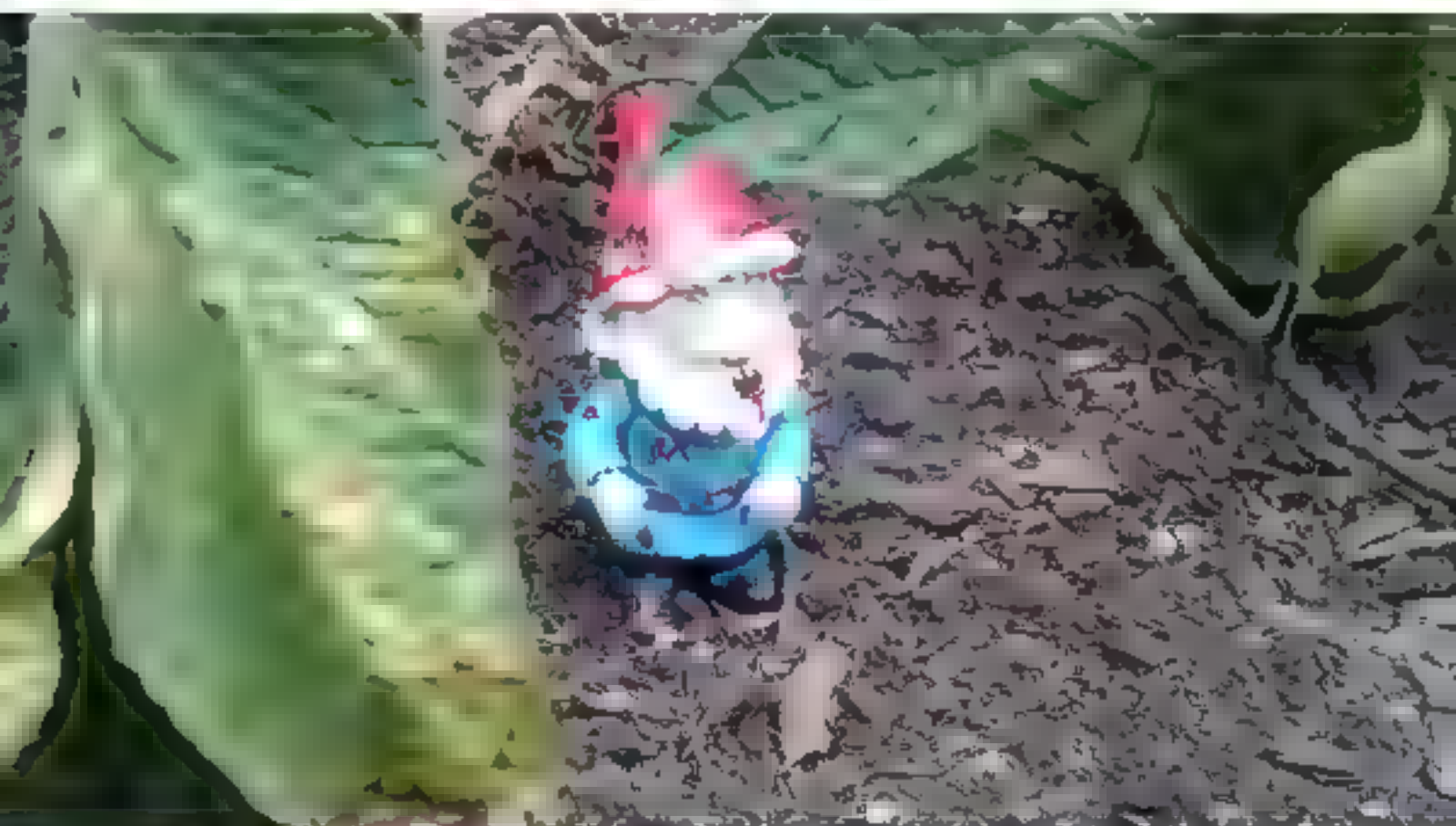
If they are, they
took any answers
with them. I wish
I'd learned
something from
them...



You, uh,
wanna go
out on
a real
date?

I thought
the explosion
was the
real date.





C'mon. We still have
to get that suffrage
bill passed.

Yes! Work!
Responsibility!



I didn't want to get
involved, but let's eke
out a sapient victory!

... qualify as sapient
under the new
legislation!



Huh.
Really.

Who are you
gonna vote
for?

whoever h.t.
tells me to!



Never mind. Losing
is baked into this
job

h.t. is wise
and has
lettuce!



Angry confrontation
redux! You trained those
turtles to obey
you!

Oh, very well.



I may not have
been fully honest
when you asked if
the turtles were
dangerous.



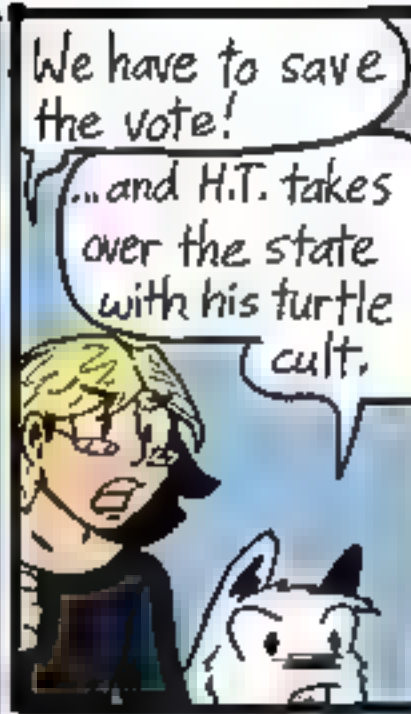
In fact there is
no animal as
dangerous as the
controllable voter



What about one of those
fugu fish, like, strapped
to an
ICBM?

Also dangerous:
time thieves.
Adieu.





Director, I suggest we break secrecy and go directly to the local press.

Ok ay.

We risk the Fixers swooping in, but the public deserves to know what?

Let's start breaking rules.

Up is down! Black is white! I'm violating my fraternization policy! It's complete social collapse!

Odd reply, but I'll take it.

Don't go far! In the apocalypse I'll need your thumbs to fashion crude spears!



So these "nonhuman sapients" are mutant doomsday cultists? No! Well, some. But they blew themselves up.



But they're not all like that! Like anyone, they come in all types!



Like the ones assembling a political machine to take over America?

Um.



Turns out the shadow gov doesn't go public because we suck at it.

By the way, you're very attractive!

Thank you!





I flubbed the
TV interview.

Cheer up. This'll
be good for
us NHSs.

Really?

Sure!
People'll
hear all the bad,
stupid stuff you
said about us.

But they'll see you
looking really weird
and crazy so you
must be wrong!
Net win!

You have
a unique
way of
cheering
people up.

It worked,
right? Let's
go play with
the ice
machine!



We've got press
at the door.

Let me do
damage control

You sure you
want our
human dude
speaking
for us?

He's less
threatening.
And more
visible to the
reality-blind.

We've got
the lived
experience
and stuff!

And he can
seduce
reporters

I can
eat 'em!
More
efficient!

Nobody's
ready to
live your
experience.

How'd
'damage
control'
go?

Good news:
I think I
killed the more
inflammatory
coverage.



Bad news: I'm to
speak at a special
legislative
session.

Why's
that
bad news?



It's way too much
exposure! The
shadow gov will
go into crisis
mode!



No, I
already
deployed
my best
dress!



And this is our
spokesman.

I offered to go
in with the
sriracha.



I promise I'll make this right at the hearing.

Talk is cheap, Tip.



Don't worry. I'll be prepared.

I just need a new look.



You can't fix everything with makeovers, Tip!

Watch me!



So are we gonna try to stop his bananas thing, or—

I'd rather see if I **can** fix everything with booze.



However this shakes out, we're in trouble, huh?

Our bosses don't like when secret agents de-secret themselves.

But nonhumans will be more public, which changes everything.

So we wrecked stuff so much we can't tell if it's good or bad or what even is going on.

Yeah. It's kind of wonderful.

Babe! Is this... a rampage?

Ideological rampage, sugar. The most dangerous kind.

Well, here we
are on the
cusp of
history.

I feel
all
prickly
inside.



I'm
nervous
too.

No, it's all
the old
beluga bones
I stuck
in me.



Do I want
to know why?

It's Vermont's
state fossil!



Going
native,
eh?

State motto:
"Freedom
and Unity."
Says it all.





You think
Tip can
get through
this?

It's a
concern.



Our fate rests on his
testimony, and I can
imagine him swanning
in with any kind of
bizarre outfit...



Are you
ready,
Dr.
Wilkin?



Of course,
Councilman.
Let me get
the relevant
documents.



Except
that
one.



Are...
are those
pants?



...as a student of
nonhuman psychology,
I'm pleased to speak
at this hearing. I can't
promise I'll be worthy
of this audience...



...but I'll do
my utmost to
satisfy.



I feel dirty.

He's loosening
his tie! Dude
knows no mercy!



All these years, I thought
Tip got his powers from
drag. But what if it
was the only thing
holding back his raw
male sexuality?



He's like a
Harrison
Bergeron
of sexy
times.



No...this is
a whole new
plateau of
game.

He used to need the
ladyclothes, but now
he can work it any
time, under any
conditions!



Though
the little
waistcoat
helps.



Oh, you
are **not**
recrossing
your legs,
you sadist.

Tip, what the hell
are you **doing?**

Getting through
this hearing.



But...
the hair...
and the
suit...

I'm not stupid.
I know people
take a man in
a suit more
seriously than
one in a dress.



For the greater good,
I'm assuming my
full privilege as a
straight-ish white
human
guy.



Really?
What's
it
like?

Suffocating
but strangely
cozy. Like
wool gabardine.



I, er, know this is
a big sacrifice
for you...

Forget
about it.



I have to finish
confirming the
psychological
soundness of
nonhuman sapient.



Then its off with
Councilwomen
Hoatson and Bland
for dinner, dancing,
and whatever comes
to mind.

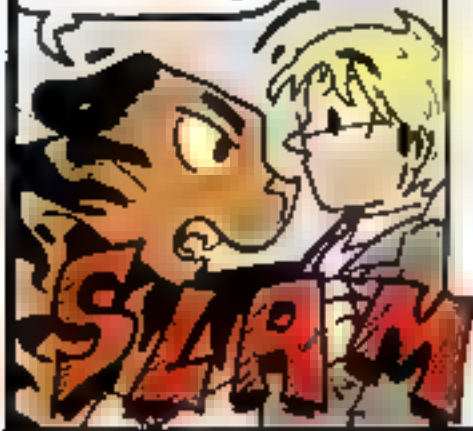


Still
got it
in a
suit,
eh?

In this
suit, it's not
even a
challenge.



Adorable. You think
you can flirt your
way to a favorable
decision.



I fear you rather
overestimate your
charms. If you
imagine... er...
ahem...



Good lord. Sorry, had it
dialed a tad
high. I'll put the
glasses back on.







Excuse me, is there
a morning paper?
I need to check
the news.



Also, I broke
your waffle
iron. I am
so, so sorry.



Aw, where'd
you come
from? Who's
a good
dog?



Good?
Did you
hear me
about the
waffle iron?



Good
boy!
Or girl!



I deserve this
for over-
battering my
waffles, but
it's still
demeaning.



What's going on?
We spoke at check-in ..

Sweetheart!
What's the meaning of this?

I can't raise **any** of my City Council contacts! What did you people do?

Us?

Ed, what's been going on at this hotel?

HOLY SMOKES IT'S A TIGER.

We're in the Chamber of Commerce together, Ed.

Yes! A tiger!
...I don't know, a
circus maybe?

Whoa, hey, a crisis
I didn't cause.



Thank God. Animal
Control, right?

Uh, sure. Who ya
want me to control?



The tiger!

Yeah, okay. H.T.,
let's go have free
hotel breakfast
instead of
bugging folks.



I was
hoping for
a bamboo
cage.

No waffles,
though, cuz
this thing's
full-on
broke.



Grabbed lunch out of a Dumpster. Sorry hotel breakfast didn't work.

I'll eat anything.



At least **you** can walk about without causing a riot.

How's the cover story coming?



Come see the trained tiger who's definitely supposed to be here! He knows tricks!



Humiliatingly. Why?

Be grouchy and ungrateful! Good tiger!



Tip!
Tell us
we're not
going
crazy!

As a
psychologist,
I can
do that!



Here are last
night's council
minutes. They're
debating non-
human rights...



...and here they
stop, mid-sentence.
Like they're under
some unnatural
mind control.



Says the man
who seduced
the entire
town.

That
was
natural.
I'm
attractive.



[illegible]

Of course
Gladys
and her
the
my daughter



$\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{2} = \frac{1}{4}$
 $\frac{1}{4} \times \frac{1}{4} = \frac{1}{16}$
 $\frac{1}{16} \times \frac{1}{16} = \frac{1}{256}$

Dudes...whatever's going on here is spreading nationwide.

It's reality blindness.



Suddenly it's affecting all humans, not just some.

Very well. I have a plan.



Let's step back, assess the situation, then calmly and rationally eat all humans.



Your plan intrigues me. Tell me more.

Present company will get a short head start.



We're not going to start eating people.

I'd say the time is right.

Clearly, playing the humans' game is no longer an option.

They're stripping us of our very identities! How long will you lick their heels?

Would that be plain, or could we dip 'em in Buffalo sauce?

We're not eating people!

H.T.,
this is
no time
to panic.

Correct.
This is
war!



SKG/TOW

I will become
Saladin! Hannibal!
Leonidas! Inhuman
armies shall move
at my command!



When the history
of this age is
written, it will be
written in fire, and
that fire will bear
my name!



... Oh, and could you
fine people
give me a
ride to
Montpelier?



Buy your
own bus
ticket,
Genghis.



Just last night, we
were on the cusp of
a victory for
nonhuman
rights.

Welcome
to our world,
duder.



You try to piece
a life together,
knowing deep down
it can be ripped
apart any time...



... and then some
unknown person
gets a craving for
disco fries and
eats a hole in your
apartment
floor.



Yes, that
mystery
remains
unsolved.

Ooh, think
we can get
disco fries
around here?



We'd better get back to HQ. Nick's on his way. He sounds the same.



Tip, are you planning to keep the man-drag?

I, er, don't have much choice.



The truth is, I traded my entire wardrobe to Tremontino for one perfect suit.



I'm sure I'll have sympathy when I'm not forced to obey leash laws.



I hope nothing wiped people's memory of how fierce I looked.



Ooh!
Can I
pet your
dog?

Better not.
She's beset
by malaise.



Hey,
you're
human.
Howcum
you're
okay?

Trace were-
wolf DNA?
Constant
weirdness
exposure?



So other humans
might not be
reality blind!

Maybe...but they'd
have to be
exceptional.



Jonah Yu!
Why aren't
you
answering
your phone?

I, uh,
had trouble
with some
mayonnaise.



FUTURE

a Cousecor's Collective collection



Shaenen K. Garrity • Liz Conley

Evani Walldinger • Lauren Davis • Pancha Diaz • Karen Luk

Our site traffic has gone off a cliff!

By how much?

In the U.S., **100%**. I thought the server was down!

On no. It's that K-pop piece I did.

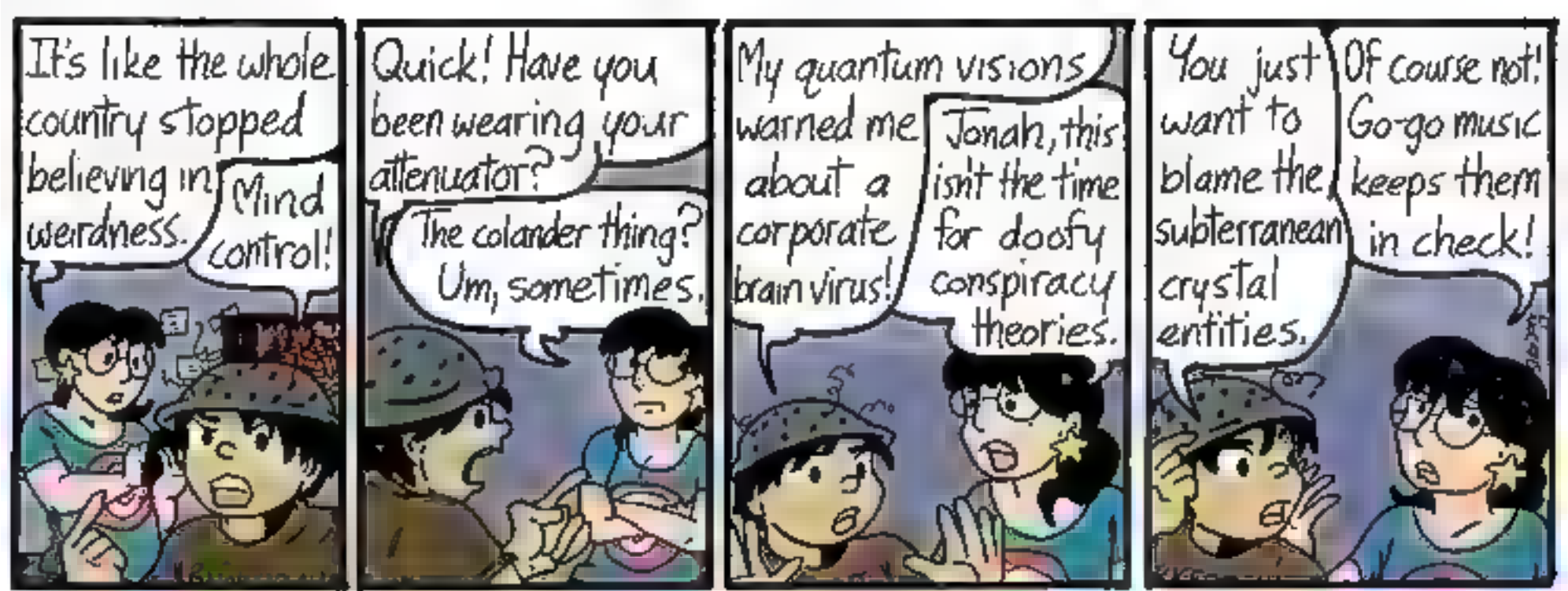
Something is afoot.

Well, I stand

by it: Highlights is too good a band to be human!

Is there a way to make your cool insight powers kick in?

Their name used to be **Beast**. Boss.



Something this drastic has to come from the top. Let's consult my shadow government org chart.



Thumbtacks, string, and scrawled notes? Do you know how unhinged this looks?



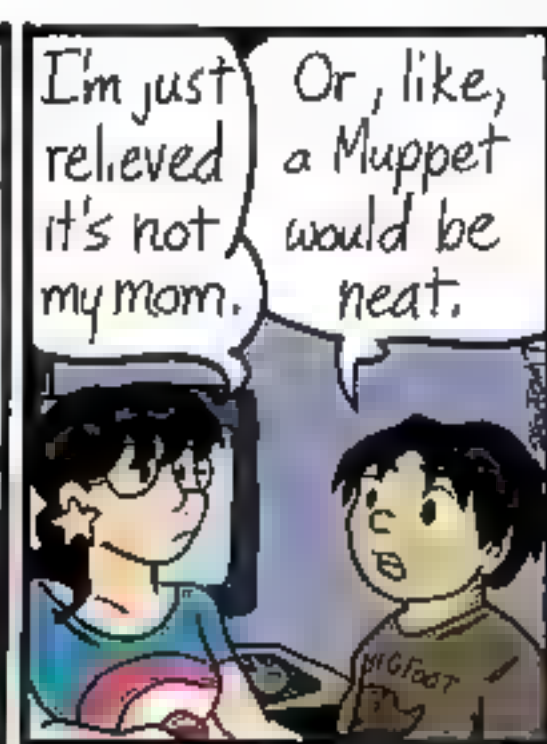
Fortunately, I've been conducting my own investigation, using cutting-edge information tech.



I see. Much saner.

Correctly formatted hyperlinks mean "not crazy."





I've analyzed all data
from our raid on
Carbondale. Carbondale!

Where I gained my
uncanny powers...
and my calling.

The head honcho
at Anasigma is a
"Mr. Green."

I'm Jonah Yu:
Weirdness
Investigator!

tak
tak

I believe Mr. Green
is one of several
identities..that..

uh. *Carbondale!*
The paranormal
is beyond
the pale...

I feel like
this should
earn me
more
respect.

I'm writing
a theme
song for
you, too.

A-Sig has records of three undercover agents — Goldbug, Violet Bee, and Dr. Ao — who only seem to exist online.



You think they're all aliases of "Mr Green"?

It's a pattern. All color names.



Even Dr. Ao?

Ao is Japanese for "blue."

And it used to mean green.



The Conspiracy wasn't counting on a giant anime nerd. I learned an entire language from "JoJo's Bizarre Adventure" memes.





The illustration is a stylized representation of a scene from the novel 'The Great Gatsby' by F. Scott Fitzgerald. It depicts the character Jay Gatsby, represented by the woman in the black dress, holding a bouquet of flowers, and the character Nick Carraway, represented by the white dog, standing next to a large cross. The background features a crescent moon.

I say
we pay
a visit
to Mr.
Green.

We can't take
on the head
of the
Conspiracy!



My quantum visions
tell me this is
the most terrible
danger we've ever
faced!



Did they tell you
I already paid
for the Amtrak
tickets?



Stupid
unhelpful
quantum
visions.

Washington D.C.!
Which monument
do you think
we'll be
buried under if
we're caught?



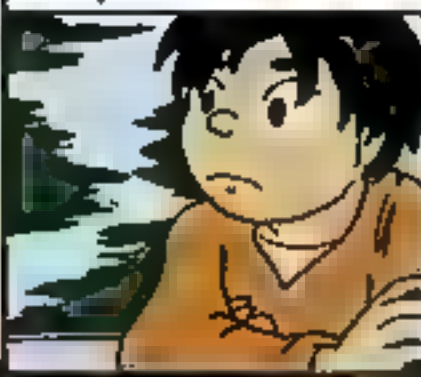
Once again you're on the road, your limited second sight looking foggy.



There are so many branching paths now, the glimpses of possible futures are just confusing.



With everything shifting, can you stay on the path that keeps Nera in your life?



Train corndogs with six packets of mayo! Eat up!



Or would you rather live to legal drinking age?

Here we
are
Shadow-
gov
central.

Looks
friendlier
than the last
facility we
died at.



Don't be lulled! We
have to strike and
quickly
flee this
heckhole!

Welcome
to the
Maragda
Building!



Are you here for
the luxury pedicure
demo, or are you
the kitten-rescue
volunteers?



Yup, a
surgical
strike.

Fiends!
She'll betray
God and
country for
kittens!



If you don't have a passcode, I'll have to call security.

No need!

Why not?

Um... well, you see—

We're the wifi techs scheduled for 11:15. Authority code Zulu-Zulu nine-oh.

That... checks out.

Yup, we're experts at pulling data out of thin air.

That we are, Shalonda Jones, who you are!

Thanks, Sarah!
Nice save, but we can't rely on your quantum thingy.



Also, cool as that was, they'd be idiots not to have an eye on us now.



Good thing the monitor guys about to get chewed out by his boss.



For...?

What we're about to do in here, probably.

Spoilers, Jonah.



That's his car. I saw the shadow it in a bunch of futures

You'd think a boss would have a cooler ride.



Like a Gremlin. Here's where I stop being useful. I can't foresee car keys.

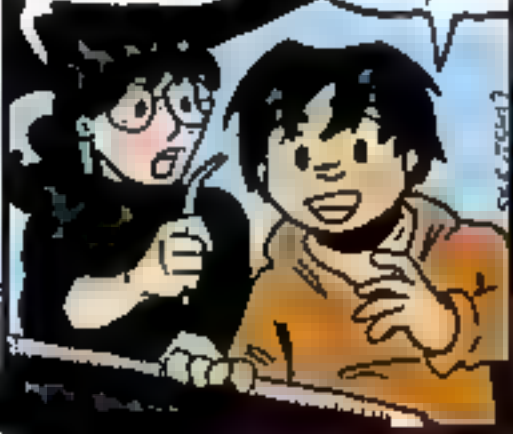


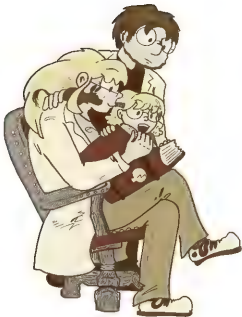
Allow me. Oh yeah. I forgot we have miracle tech devices, too.



I just picked the lock with my underwire.

So it's a miracle in **two** ways!





No Illuminati secrets
in the trunk.
What's your
future sight
pick up?

Just
darkness.

That's unnerving.
What could be
symbolized by—

OH CRAP
HE'S COMING
MAKE ROOM

SLOW

Welp.
Turns out
it was
literal.

Thing is,
future sight
isn't super
useful.

Uh, sorry it's
so cramped
in here.

And
jiggly.

I wasn't going
to mention-

I mean the car.
Where are we going?

I'll take
a peek.

Hope there's
no one
out there.



Nope.
No one
there.

Oh good.
I'll have
somewhere
to barf.

I'm texting
my entire
address book.
HELP, I'M IN
A ROCKET
CAR—

With the
weirdness
block, will
anyone
see it?



Maybe make it sound
non-weird. Like, "1 mi
over New Hampshire,
nbd—"

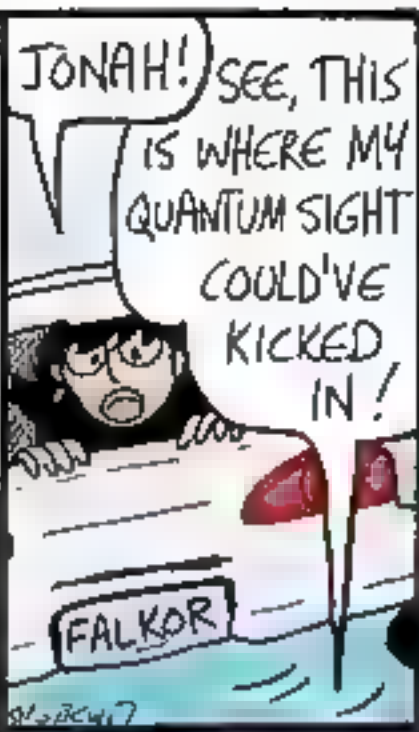


SWOOP



I can
suggest
emojis!





Falling out of a flying car. At least you know from experience there are sillier ways to die.



26 20 7

Cellophane! First week back on the job and I'm saving Yu's small fried oysters again!



Might not be a sillier way to get rescued, though.

You interrupted an **epic** flamewar with the Department of Jetpack Suppression.



Okay, Scoobies. This
grass hut is
Jonah Yu.

Quick!

My partner's been
kidnapped by
Mr. Green!

What?

The head
of
A-Sig?

talking dog,
okay

Yes! Scoop up
his rocket car
with Nick's
loading ramp!



Don't look at me.
You wrote this one.

I
know!

i drew
a
airplane!



If our investigation is on point, in that car is the head of Anasigma.

And we owe it to two intrepid-



Hey, shouldn't you kids be in school?



I passed on college to focus on the Truth.



I'm on leave from MIT due to an incident delightfully reminiscent of the film "Real Genius."



Only in that it involved an angry DoD.



So basically we work Jonah's dad's Dunkin' Donuts.



Time to confront
the spider at the
center of the
super-shadow-
government web.



Whoever "Mr. Green" is,
he's a master of
subterfuge. Be on
guard against cunning
attempts to cloud our
minds—



Oh, hey, guys. Think
you can grab me a
Coke before you
drop me
off?



Shelby
Sillers
?!

You know
him, huh?



He's not Mr. Green!
He's a maintenance
guy! The perfect
cover for an
intel op.



Sure, he's weirdly hyper-
competent, he shows up
in places
he shouldn't
be—

And the
rocket car.
Very fishy.



Stop
helping!

Just trying
to facilitate.
I'm on a
schedule.



Confess!
Confess
you're a
spy!

Of course
I'm a spy!

Whoa.
Really?

Mister-September.
Superhuman agent
and member of
AG-I.

rip!

You're a superhero?

Government
licensed. I'm a
spy for **your**
side, jagoffs.

Man, we
hate
super-
heroes!

But can you
do the shirt
thing again?
That was cool.

This is bananas. You got super-powers?

Enhanced abilities, mild telekinesis, basic healing aura. Nothing huge.



I went undercover in Annex One building maintenance to weed out A-Sig corporate agents in the shadow gov.



So who are they?



I was hoping **you** guys knew.

You've been around for like ten years!



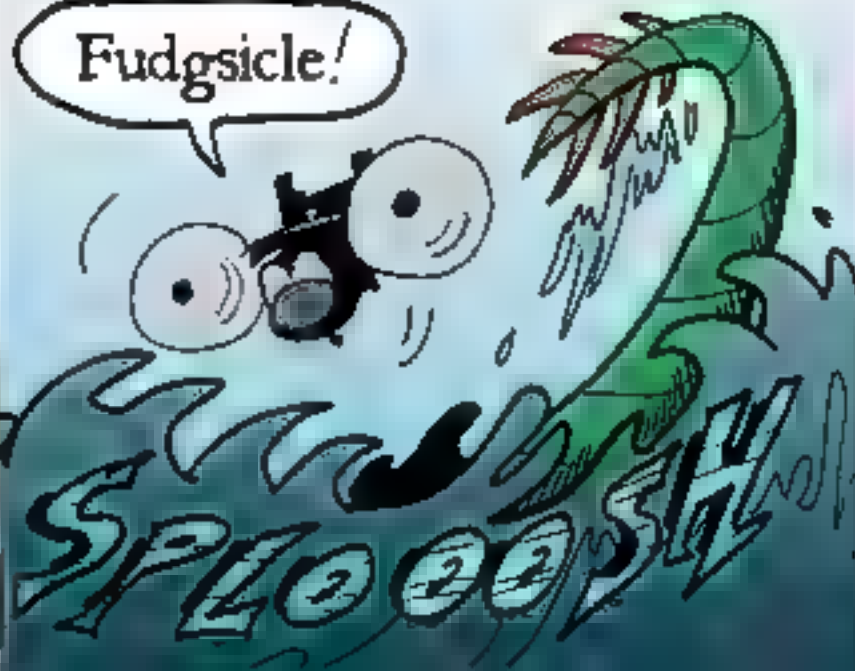
There've been **so** many pipes to unclog.

Can I go now?

No! There are so many questions! What's your real identity? How much do you know?



Fudgsicle!



And what the hell is **that?**

My 5:00. Seriously, can I go?



Mike September Transparencies



Superhero for the J.S. speaker

1994



for your side



And P who it?



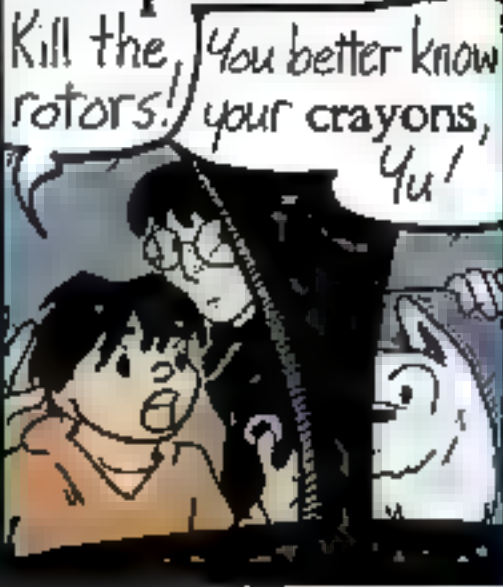
Hold on tight,
mushers! I'll try
to break free!

No!



In 99 universes that's
a **very bad idea!**

Kill the
rotors! You better know
your crayons,
Yu!



AAAGH
MONKEY EATING
SPIKE BISCUIT
LIZARD

There!
Back in the
best of all
possible
worlds!

Says the
nemotode
who ain't got
his skin
peeled off.



The sea creature's gone under-water.

Can't pursue slippers anyway. I need maintenance, stat.

putt

putt putt

Uh, we're in the middle of the ocean and my instruments ain't picking up spoons.

No offense to your instruments, but that's the idea.

And I thought our charcuterie was a waste of tax dollars.

Nobody badmouth the meat bar!

I never heard about this carrot seed when I was in AG-I.

You quit right after training. There's a lot you didn't hear.



You didn't know I'm a member, for one.

Terrier! That's why you were at the Jersey Devil op!

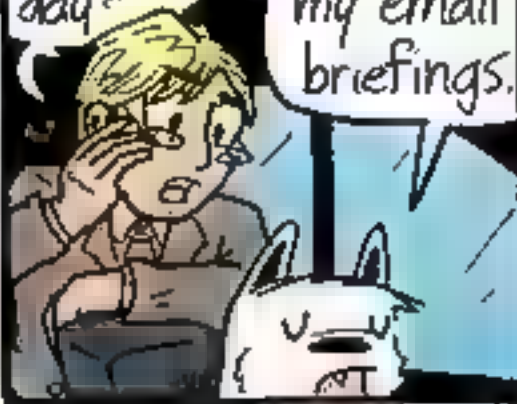


I was there to evaluate you and Red Knight. Didn't expect a team from Skin Horse to show up.



Just so I'm keeping up, was that the time HR was out for a day?

Someone should read my email briefings.



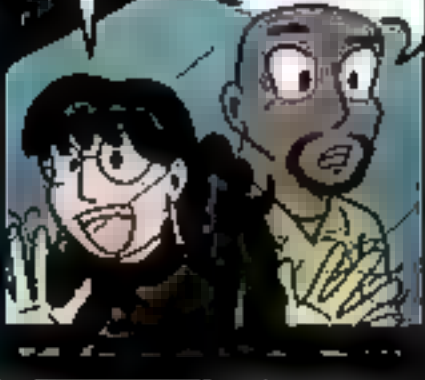
What **is** this thing?
It scans as ocean ice.

That's what it is.
Welcome to the carrier Habakkuk.



A mobile offshore base!
Sweet!

AG-I is just leasing her. She's privately owned.



Yeah? Who owns this thing, and will they be happy to see us?



joy!

Oh, these clowns.

Can't speak for her XO, though.



Bubbles? This is Captain
You own Olympia Waters,
this craft? and you will
address her
as such!



I know
service! who they
are! It's
still your
ship!



service
is my
only
joy!

I got my
eye on
all'a
you.



The Truth
is weird.

Yeah.

Service
iiiiis!



Looks like
you've been
doing well,
Bubbles.

Service,
joy.
Service,
joy.



Ms. Waters
is the CEO
of two
major
global
charities
How much
did you
blow on
this ice
cube?



This was bought
with your own stock
payouts,
I recall?

my
only!



Babe, remind me why
we're in public sector?

We know more
than five words.

Not.





NICK!!! WHAT ARE
YOU DOING HERE?!

Who's that?

This is Goose Girl,
a superhero I used
to work w I'M
GOOSE GIRL! I
WAS BITTEN BY A
RADIOACTIVE,
GOOSE!

I DIDN'T ASK FOR
THESE CANADA GOOSE
POWERS! I CAN
DISCERN TRUE NORTH,
BUT AT A TERRIBLE
COST!

You mean
going
totally
mental?

GOING
MENTAL
COUNTS AS
A POWER!

What's
AG-I
doing
here?

Hunting
sea mons -

HUNTING
SEA
MONSTERS!

NICK! HOW'D YOU
KNOW OUR MISSION?

From Cerebriac.
You pandas never
deleted my login.

And Cerebriac
is...?

ONLY
THE GREATEST
THREAT-SENSING
NETWORK ON
THE PLANET!

Except
for network
security
threats,
huh?

I.T. went to
cake after
they lost
Electron Boy
to Google.

THIS IS OUR REMOTE
LINK TO CEREBRIAC!

A danger screen!
That's Superfriends-
level cool!

DANG SKIPPY
IT'S COOL!

Looks
tricky to
calibrate.

WE LEAVE THAT TO
OUR TECH GAL,
CINDERBLOCK!

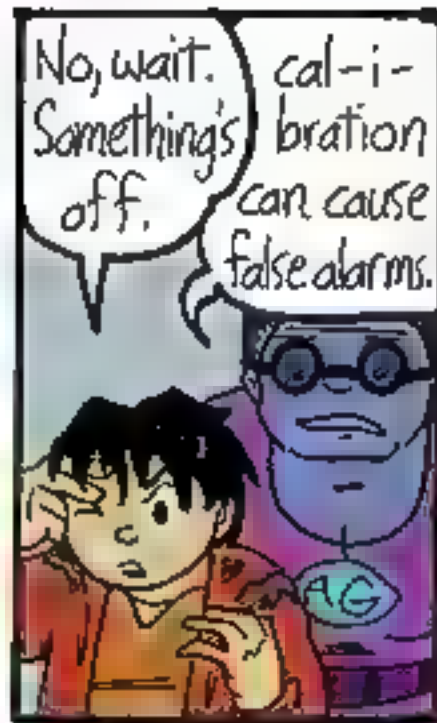
Ooh, strong **and**
smart. Like
She-Hulk!

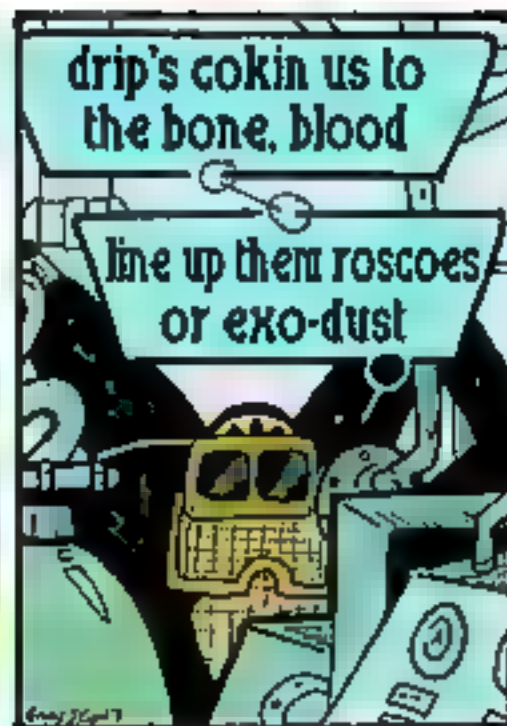
WHAM

cal-i-brated.

Or just
regular
Hulk.

THUMPING
FIXES
THINGS!





The sea monster's back!

GIVE IT EVERYTHING WE HAVE, CAPTAIN!



Service is my only joy.

FIRE!



Are we sure service is her **only** joy?

Because it looks—

She's got a few.





WE'VE GOT 'IM ON
THE ROPES, CINDER!
READY FOR THE
THING?!

always.



So, uh,
anyone
need any
pencils
moved?

service
is not
only



That's the plan?
Just keep punching the cryptid?

WE DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO STRATEGIZE! CEREBRIAC IS ALL WONKY!



IT'S GETTING TO BE A REAL PROBLEM!

I may have a fix.



It involves bringing in someone **exceptional...**



Kid, how'd you like to serve your country?

Theeth ithe wallth are **cold.**



So! Mr. September
tells me you show
precognitive abilities!

Uh, sort of. I got
hit with quantum
radiation.

But I only see
possibilities, and
only sometimes, so
don't dissect my
brain, okay?

Jonah! We don't
want to dissect you!
We want to
recruit
you!

Oh.
Cool.

This doesn't
speak well
to your
precog powers.

I **said**
"sort
of"!

Let me be direct,
Jonah. AG-I can use
someone with
your
talents.

Stoked!

At present, I'm the
team's only psychic.
A quantum precog
would be great
for sensing threats.

You're super-
human. We'd love
to see
what
you can
do.

Wait! I tell
Nera we're
gonna be
superheroes!

You're super-
human. We'd love to
see what
you
can do.

Less
stoked!

AG-I is for
enhanced
humans only.
This invitation
is for you
alone.

On wait!
I'm getting
a vision
of the
future!

I see me...
getting up from
this chair!

I see me peacing
out... you guys
sailing off
without me...

The team's needed a
snarky quip guy
since Nick
left...

I see
your search
continuing...

Please convince your friend to join A.G.-I.

Meh, I trust his judgment.



He could be using his talents as part of a team!

Yeah, thing about that.



When the guy who can see the future doesn't wanna join your team... it doesn't bode well for your team, does it?



This goes more smoothly with the kids with laser eyes and such.



Hey, do you have a theme song? Will you sing it?





No water
from your
cup!



i just
sang a
sticky
song.



Easy (revel
10-12-10

YOU CAN'T HELP TAKE
OUT A SEA MONSTER?!

WE HEARD
YOU WERE
BADASSES!

We're just
a welfare
agency.



YOU FOUGHT WERE-
WOLVES IN ALASKA
AND LIKE THREE
ZOMBIE APOCALYPSES!

Well, yes. But it
wasn't the **goal**.



HOW CAN A MERE
WELFARE AGENCY
LEAVE A TRAIL OF
DESTRUCTION IN
ITS WAKE?!



Anybody know how to
get hunks of flesh
and cape from between
your teeth?

Oh.



Could the files back at your office be any use?

The hard copies are at our old building, Annex One.



Except the files that were eaten by operatic silverfish.

Or got burned up in the indoor tire fire we started!



Anyway, the whole place is now a funk-themed roboticist's doom lair.



Why wasn't any of this in your reports, September?

Respectfully, ma'am, it sounded really dumb.

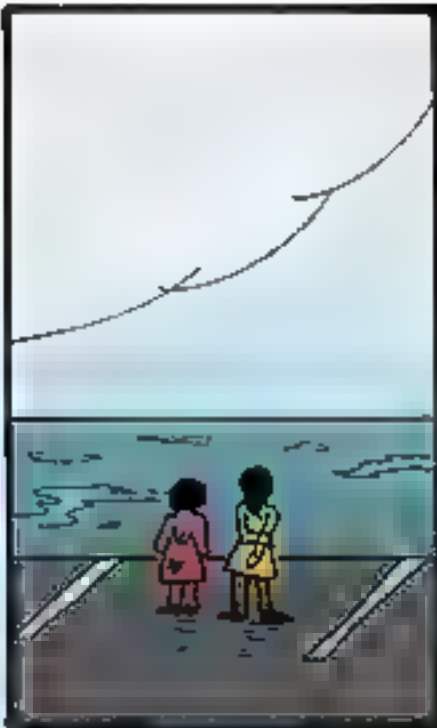


Don't give up
on being a
superhero
on my
account.

It's not
you. AG-I
gives off a
bad vibe.



Cool. As soon as
Nick's fixed, we
can go home to
our normal lives.



You're hacking
the hell out
of them
right now,
aren't you.

Viruses
uploaded.
Wanna help
set up
surveillance?



It's fortunate you're here. With this reality blindness epidemic, we have trouble protecting the public from supernormal threats.



Like the sea monster?

Exactly. What can Skin Horse tell us about it?



Nick has all our files in his onboard memory. So no data on secret fatal weaknesses? No match.



We ask clients about peanut allergies, if that helps. You're one of the less cool agencies, aren't you?



I know from Black Ops,
and AG-I
is a buncha
doodles.

Join our
Covert
Investigation!

It stinks being the
only sane sapient.
I wish Dr. Lee
was here.

I bet
you do.

I mean to add
her expertise.

And smooches!

I am king of black
ops and you don't get
to talk anymore.

How would
smooches work,
though?

Writing
the fanfic
now.

If the AG-I computer's fritzzy, maybe it registered a false positive on the sea creature.



False positive my hat. That thing almost yanked us into Cousteau country.



Before or after AG-I started beating on it?

I... ah. You're right.



Say that again.

No.

Nick admits I was right! I win our decade-long flamewar!



Now apologize for spoiling the last Harry Potter book!

Shut up

in graduating
from [unclear] or
register to [unclear] by military

Uncle Sam
doesn't want you
because you're on a
warrior's
list.

Figure 4 $\frac{d\sigma}{d\Omega}$ vs θ for ^{10}B and ^{10}C at $E = 100$ MeV

At last we no
~~longer~~ need any
~~more~~ fuel.

Ar. I am over your head
I hope it goes well
I hope you are

So I'm starting
out at Wednesday

2. **Output**

20/20

10/10/19

Met
Tina
Independent

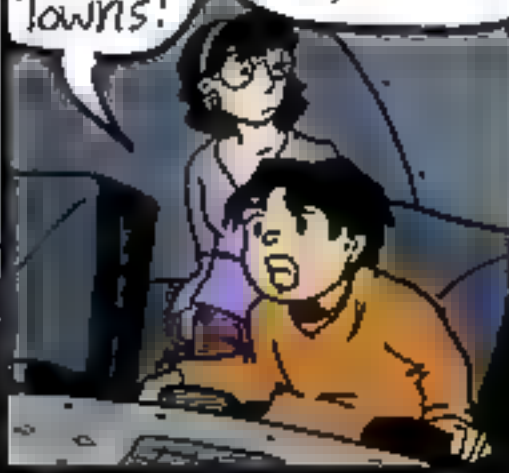
test v.
~~was~~ ^{was} ~~not~~ ^{not} ~~that~~

with red ochre
and purple.

regards for
you &
family.
21 Aug.
Will you
write

C'mon, Nick! Help us investigate terrorized coastal towns!

Fine, I'm in.



And I'm out. I'll stay here and look into this super-team

How?



Mingle. Deploy some wiles. I know how to work the system.



Captain! Requesting a case of Doritos and a door I can lock!

She **does** have a trim salute, ma'am.



First we need an org chart showing who outranks whom.

First we need a detention strategy.



We don't know the client's biology. That leaves physical restraints.

so we can kill it?



Um, no. So we can hold it still
TO MAKE IT
EASIER TO
KILL IT!



We're not killing anything!

I'M SO
CONFUSED!

Which is why we need an org chart!



Any idea how the mass reality blindness happened?

No. I assume your agency's stumped too?

We know the goal was to stop nonhuman rights in Vermont. Make us invisible.

Find the motive, and we'll find our culprit.

Wow, Unity. You've really been thinking about this.

My guess is Wario. We're old rivals on the racing circuit.

Now stop thinking.

Poor mundanes, missing out on all this.



You ready to fly, Nick?

Repairs ain't done, but I'll manage. That'll teach my sleepy coworkers to play footsie with AG-I.



Hey, Nick! Babe says to take all the sick time you need till you get fixed up proper!



And look! I made you a get-well card!



They also better stop playing Twister with my guilt complex.



Cerebriac says this
pound is where the
sea creature hangs.

Doesn't look too
terrorized.



Maybe it's an
emotionally abusive
monster.

I'll ask around.
Keep an eye on me.



Your ESP warning
you of danger?

No, but last time I
did this I set a
house on fire with
a blender.



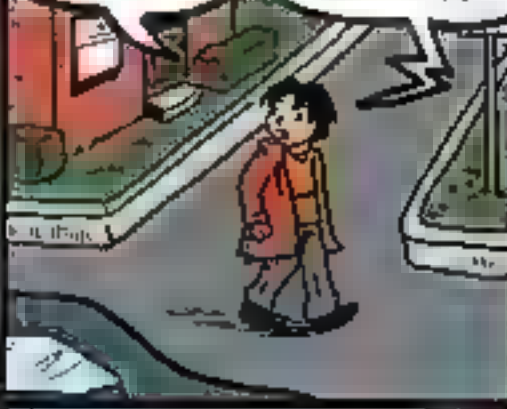
Teaming with you is
above my pay grade.

We're rogue agents!
We don't **get**
paid!



So this is what America under mind control looks like.

This is what suburbia always looks like.



Take it from a cyborg helicopter: America is fundamentally boring.

Not true!



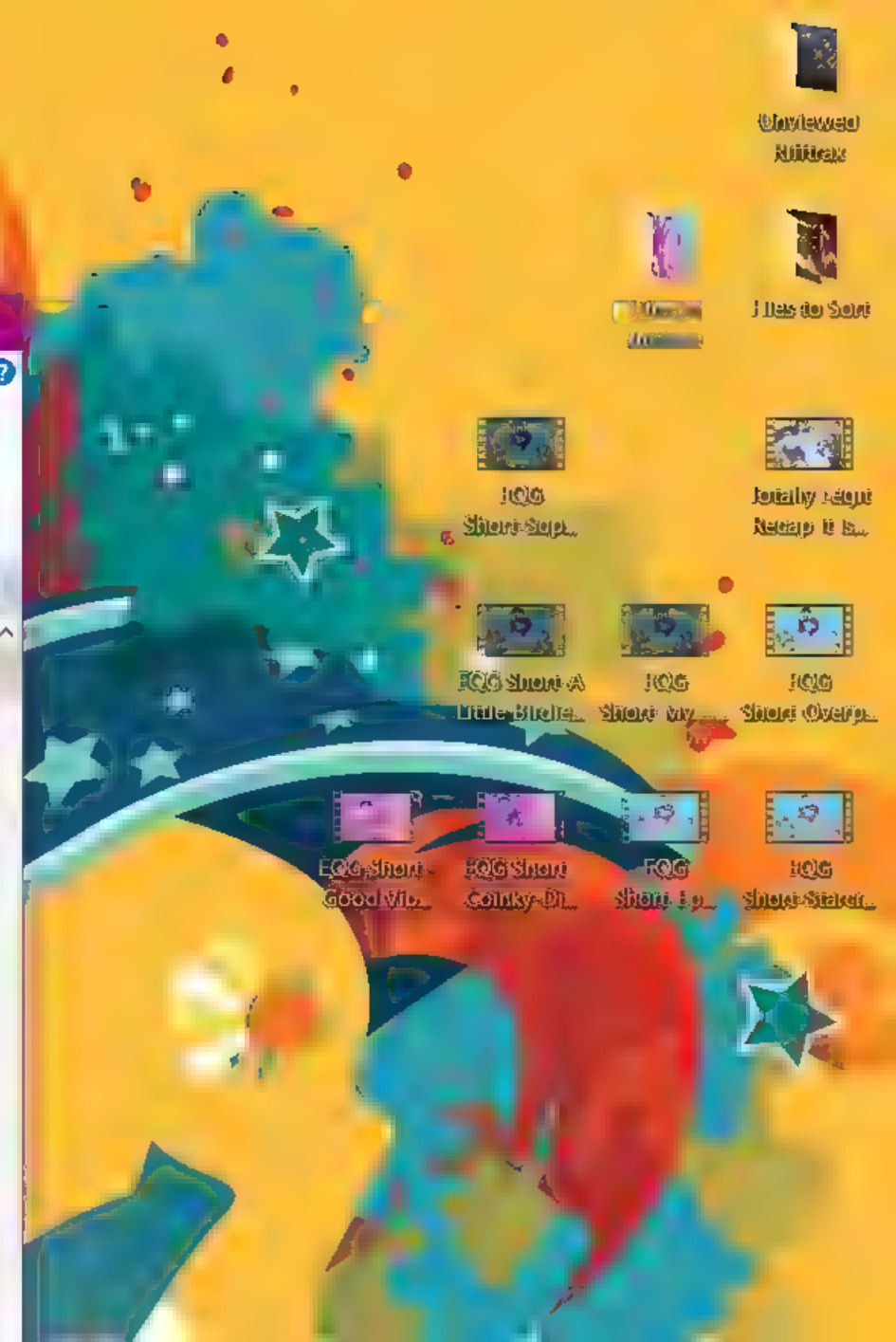
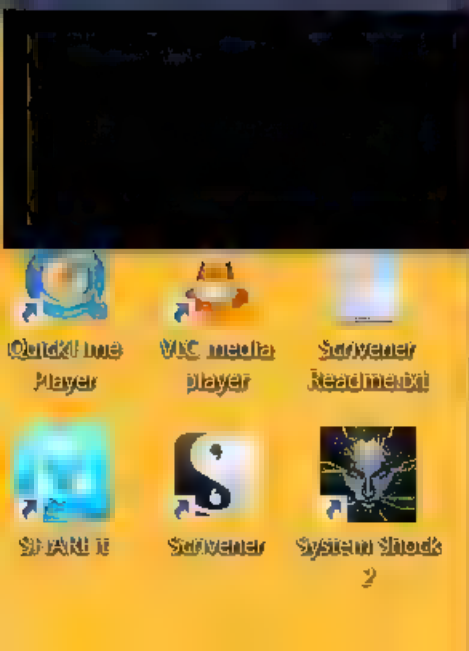
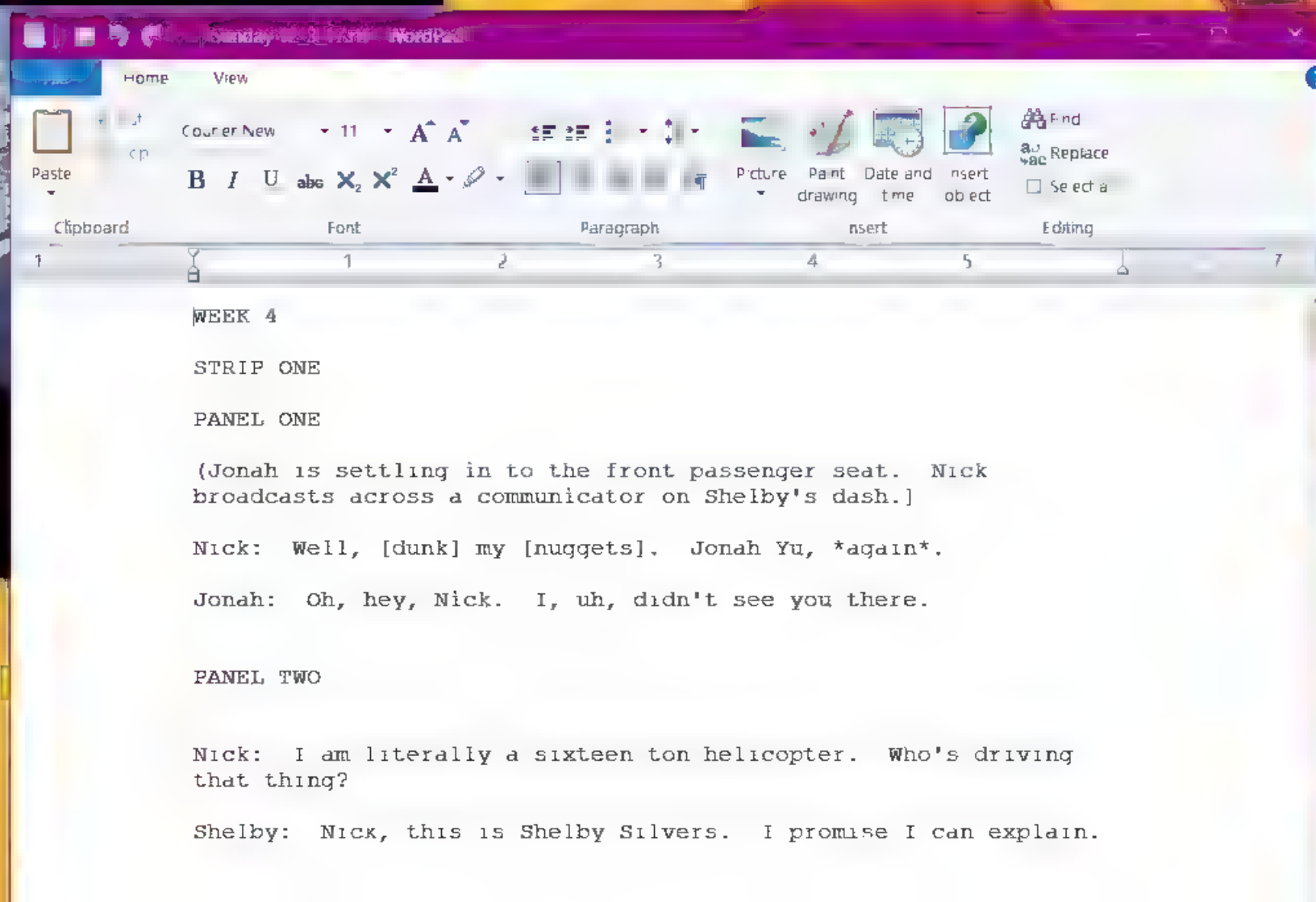
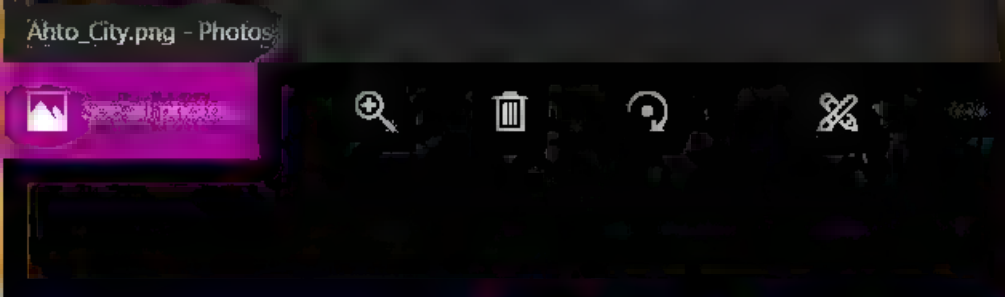
These people could've been fellow seekers of the Truth before they got slipped the brain-mickey!



Yeah, mostly vanilla porn and TMZ.com.

Our blog's biggest competitors!





Ma'am, I'm from the gas company. Gas Surprise inspection. company always gives us notice.



Fishsticks!
Hang on, lemme look up a better cover story...



Ma'am, I'm a psychic investigating monsters with my helicopter pal.

Oh! Come on in!



This reality blindness spot is weird.

Can't argue with results.



What're
you
looking
for?

Not sure. I
can't talk to
anyone 'cause
their brains
are fried.

So you're scouring
this lady's
basement for
written
records.

Bingo

Most of these boxes
are just full of her
kids' old
school
papers

Who
saves
that
stuff?

Um, literally everyone
Why, didn't your
folks-

I HAD A
NORMAL
CHILDHOOD. OPEN
THE runaway
BOX.



Ma'am, there are people trying to kill Rhodey!

Who's Rhodey?



You'd be upset if you remembered. Which means... they were waiting...



Nick, get me back to the Habakkuk **now!**



What, land in a public street in front of everyone?

Tell your boss our Netflix is working fine.



Oh, right. Prep for an ostentatious chuckling extraction.

Nera!! The sea monster isn't a threat!

He's a **target!** That syncs with what I'm finding here.



AG-I's "supercomputer" is just a terminal feeding them orders from outside.

Mr. Green?



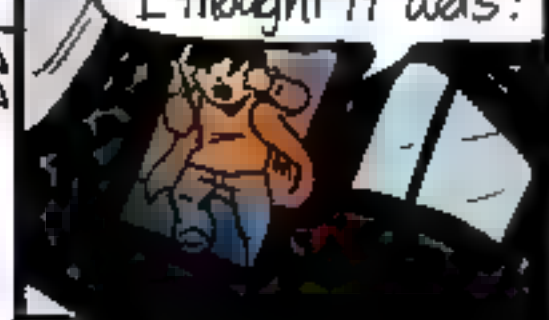
AG-I is a tool of Anasigma. And now they can use it openly.

I don't believe it! It's a conspiracy!



Bunny-husher, you're riding a black helicopter

It's a slightly different conspiracy from the conspiracy I thought it was!



You have to warn people!
Who? We don't know who to trust in AG-I!

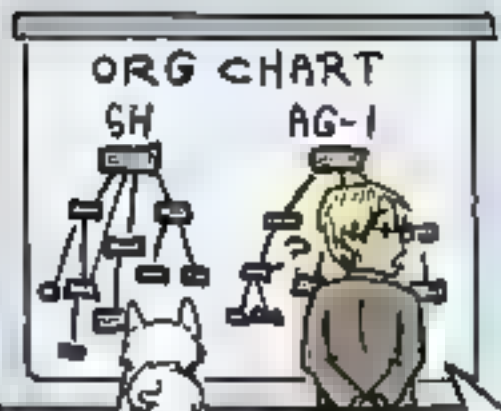


Tell Sweetheart, my CO.



The dog?

She's a barking cupcake, but she gets stuff done.



Finally!
Success!

Why are alarms going off again?



Why are they activating the artillery?

Mia'm! Nick says to tell you AG-1 is compromised!



Where **is** Nick?

Flying back here now! Where's AG-1?



Getting ready to shoot something out... of the sky...



So do we need these copies of the org chart, or not?



cerebriac
says bad
guys're
coming

TELL
CAPTAIN
WATERS
TO TURN ON
THE GUNS!



cap'n locked the
controls. says wait
for con-fir-mation.

YOU'RE OUR TECHIE!
HACK THE SYSTEM!

L. M. STONE



WHAM

crunch



GOOD
HACK!

my work
is my
poetry



Don't fire!
It's Nick!

THEN WHY'S
HE REGISTER
AS A THREAT?!



Where's
your
boss?
Panoptica
?

THIS IS NO
TIME TO GET
ANAL ABOUT
THE CHAIN OF
COMMAND!



WHILE YOU REVISED YOUR
ORG CHART, WE WERE
PREPPING TO BLAST
BADDIES!

Oh, I've
revised it,
all right.



Guess who's
on top?

dang, that's a
decent hero quip.





Quantum waveforms are collapsing in really bad directions. Does the Habakkuk have guns?



M-61 Phalanx Seawizzes. Machine gun turrets that look like big R2-D2s.

Range?



Five nautical miles, max.

Okay, turn around and fly beyond that, 'cause they're about to shoot us.



Shoulda led with "turn around," Yu.



I wanted to be accurate!

Wait! That's Nick
out th—

fire.

beep

What did
you do?!

What she
was told.

TARGET
DESTROY

It's
what
good
agents
do.

Good agents
use their
own
judgment!

One of mine built a nest
in the satellite array and
one of yours got tangled
in our monster
net mid-
breakdance.

I'm not in
the mood to
commiserate!





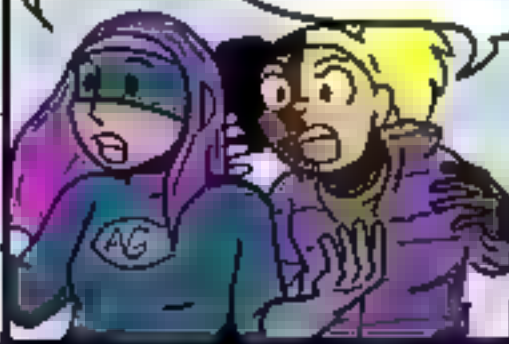
You're a telepath!
You can get the
truth out
of our
brains!

If
only.



Minds are so chaotic.
Most of the information
I pick
up is
useless.

Babe! Say
the word
and I'll--



Ahem. U.N.I.T.Y.
control phrase

"blueberry waffles."

ARRGH

dang it



While some is
very helpful.

"Tickle"! You
know I was
gonna say
"tickle"!



Dr. Wilkin!
There's trouble
down at the old
machine gun
silo!



Don't worry, I'm sure
we can sort it out
diplomatically
before things get
out of -



Should I be
mantling into
cable ducts
like it's a
survival RPG?

I have
no idea
what that
means,
but yes.



You aren't
superheroes.
You're a
hit squad!

We defend
humanity.
That's
heroic.



All you
do is
travel the
world and
beat stuff
up.

People may
not always
appreciate
our
mission.



Wait,
that
sounds
awesome.

Superhero
branding helps.
Sorry to
mislead.



Y'all
have my
résumé!

Un.ty!
Morals!
We talked
about this!



Um, why is everyone suddenly in the brig?

Communication issues.



As of now, I'm commandeering the Habakkuk.

We're stealing the ship?



Exercising eminent domain.

This is **piracy**. Piracy is stealing.



Have you considered a transfer to the FBI?

You'd kill on those DVD warnings.

No peg legs! I'm drawing a line!



I've been away from HQ for too long.

Things have become... complicated.



I signed up to be a truth-and-justice type hero, not a conflicted brooder.

We face existential threats now

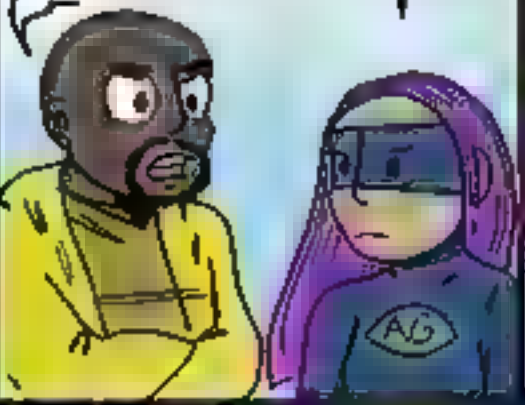


Threats to the future of the human race. Who can say which side is good and which is evil?



Our side beat up a cute dog.

That dog was asking for it.

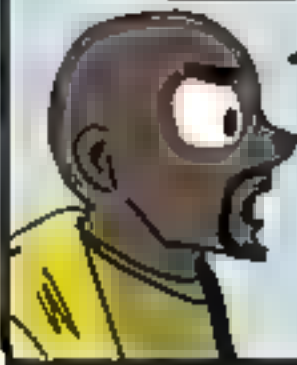




I joined AG-I
years ago to fight
for justice with
a team.



Now I'm worried
the team has turned
against justice.
I'm left all
alone in—



What'd you think of
my Edgy Crusader
monologue?
It's not my
forte...

Do a
hero thing
and help
me down!

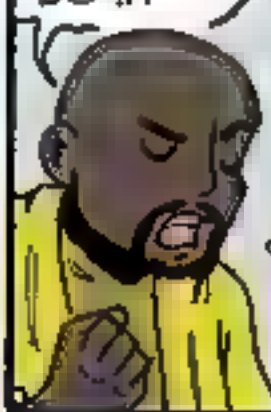


I'm sorry about
your friend...

Jonah's
not dead!



I know it's
hard, but I
swear h.s
loss won't
be in—



No, really.
We're on
video chat
right now.



Technology
ruins so
much
drama.



Okay, back
on topic.
How do you
like my duct-
hiding look?





Jonah!
Where are you,
and how did
you survive?

We're on a
sea monster,
and we're on
a sea monster.

This is
a sip
of
grog.

You civilians are
surprisingly resilient.

We're not civilians.
We're **bloggers**.

Nice
moment,
Nera!

Thanks!
Means a lot
coming from
a guy on a
snake!

So, um, thanks
for rescuing
us, Rhodey.



I investigate a
lot of cryptids, and
you're tops in terms
of being both real
and super
nice.



Also
you have
cool
stripes

Not the time
for small
talk, Yu!



Um, journalist here.
It's called laying the
groundwork
for an
interview.

It only says
"Hrrrunchh"!



SEPTEMBER!!
WHERE ARE YOU?!

Back in
the ducts!

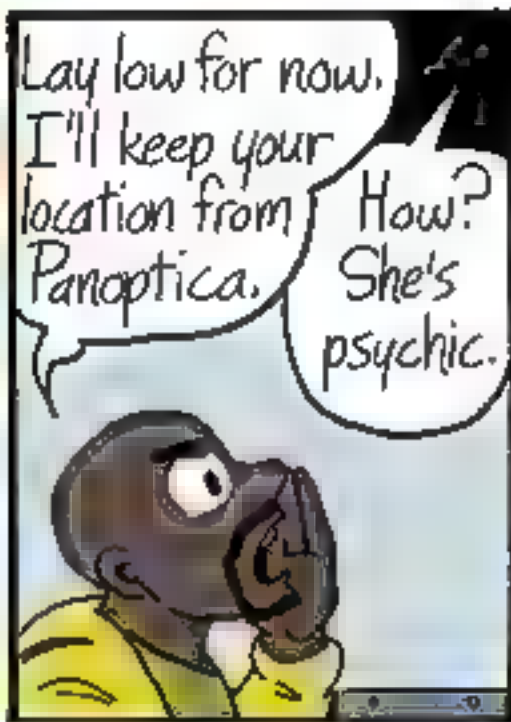
Oof!

Lay low for now.
I'll keep your
location from
Panoptica. How?
She's psychic.

Her powers take
concentration.
I'll subtly
distract her...

Is this about the new
timesheet policy?

Don't make me pretend
I know how to use
this!



You don't intend to fire that thing.

So why am I pointing it at you?



To distract me from... something...

SOMEONE SHUT OFF THE DECK GUNS!



Yes!

Fine. Deploy the anti-monster net.

Oops! Gotta go!



We'll resume our psychic-vs.-bazooka standoff later!



Like I need powers to work this one out.



I was actually trying to ask to put a little more focus, if you have the time. I was thinking of making a new blog, kind of a barometer specific to Iraq. It would have pieces of the same universe as [New York](#), although the pieces would be something you would probably be better at than I. It's just something I'm trying with right now. I thought it'd be all of the dash (go) and frequency of things that would be similar to [New York](#), generally try to do something different with every comic event. But still, it's negative that he looks like around.

 Jeffrey Wells

12/1/07

to Jeffrey

Five days. I've got all kinds of time. Seriously, I've got all the spare capacity that because many are being devoted to getting projects and I have to do something with it. Taking care with you might just do the trick.

...Channing

 Elizabeth Bentley

10/2/07

to Jeffrey

On Oct 1, 2007, at 3:26 AM, Jeffrey Wells wrote:

Five days. I've got all kinds of time. Seriously, I've got all the spare capacity that because many are being devoted to getting projects, and I need to do something with it. Taking care with you might just do the trick.

What you want to do...

The proposal is called "[Unit House](#)," [Unit House](#) being the name of a government agency devoted to issues involving terrorism intelligence. These are many instances created by various companies, for example, etc., although there might be some relatively obvious examples that a recent program being in London. [Unit House](#) is a place for all kinds of things, and it operates more like a website office, by doing primarily as the name indicates are American intelligence (although most of them are useful citizens, per say) with special needs, which [Unit House](#) covers by most. It is primarily professional and organized.







I think I fixed
the balance in
the desktop I set
I won't bounce
around in
time like Dave.

But it'll
still be
just your
mind
traveling?



Right. I've set the
time machine to pull
me back after an
hour, but I don't know
if it will work.



It's too dangerous!
Nothing's been tested!
This is the kind of
stuff we make
Dave do!



But I can't say
no to any
project where
I get to wear
a cool hat!



I
know.
Pull
the
switch.





Mike! Ruby! Wait!
Let me help—



(Dr. Smith!)

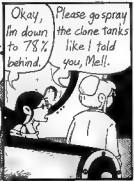
Damn it, don't throw
your life away! The
world can't lose a
grammarian
of your
caliber!

Please,
Dr. Smith,
I'm not—



Enough, Are you always
man! this histrionic,
I can sir, or is it
~~hear~~ the somehow a
semicolons! function of
the hat?









Hats have long been a sign of status, as illustrated by this editorial cartoon from the June 1814 edition of *Gentle Manne's Monthly*.

AN EDITORIAL CARTOON of SOME INSIGHTE



SMELLY UNFORTUNATE: 'Please, sir.... May I have a hat ?'

GENTLE MANNE of LEISURE: 'A-ha-ha! You are as **PRESUMPTUOUS** as you are **POOR** and **IRISH** . Tarnish notte the majesty of my **TOWER** of **HATS** . '

His COMPANIONE: 'I have maney hats also but did not bringe them .'

From the DUBLIN SOCIETY.

THE Society having received, from one of their Members in the County of *Wexford*, a particular Account of the Manner of making Gooseberry Vinegar in that Country, where they make it yearly in great Quantities, and find it Experience as good as any wine Vinegar.

RECEIPT for making GOOSEBERRY VINEGAR:

TO every Gallon of cold Water put six Pounds of ripe Gooseberries, bruise them in a Mortar with a wooden pestle, then pour the Water on them.





Artists the boy the SLA the MASTS
 Produce their badge of ancient goss
 Their present is in strange engagements
 With sea and a rump and elsewhere more

This Room by Thomas G. Smith, 1907

Colt Club



Narbonic

The Perfect Collection Book One



By Shae

Narbonic

The Perfect Collection Book Two



By Shaenon K. Garrity



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**IMAGINE PAIN--SO INTENSE
IT DEFIES DESCRIPTION--
AS COUNTLESS UNCLASSIFIED
CHEMICALS SEEP DEEP
INTO THROBBING, FUME-
ENVELOPED FLESH...**



**IMAGINE WHAT SUCH
TERRIBLE SUFFERING CAN
DO TO THE FRAGILE MIND...**



**...AS IT DRIVES THE STRICKEN
BODY FORWARD, CLAWING
DESPERATELY AT THE COOL
NIGHT AIR IN HOPES OF
SOME SMALL COMFORT...**

**IMAGINE RELIEF --AS THE
SMOLDERING MAN-SHAPE
REACHES THE SOOTHING
WATERS OF THE EVER-PRESENT
BOG...**



**...THEN DISAPPEARS SOUND-
LESSLY BENEATH ITS
BUBBLING SURFACE...**

SEE AMERICA

BY BLACK HELICOPTER



WITH
BLACK OPS SOCIAL SERVICES
A DIVISION OF THE SHADOW GOVT

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A DIVISION OF THE SHADOW GOVT

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